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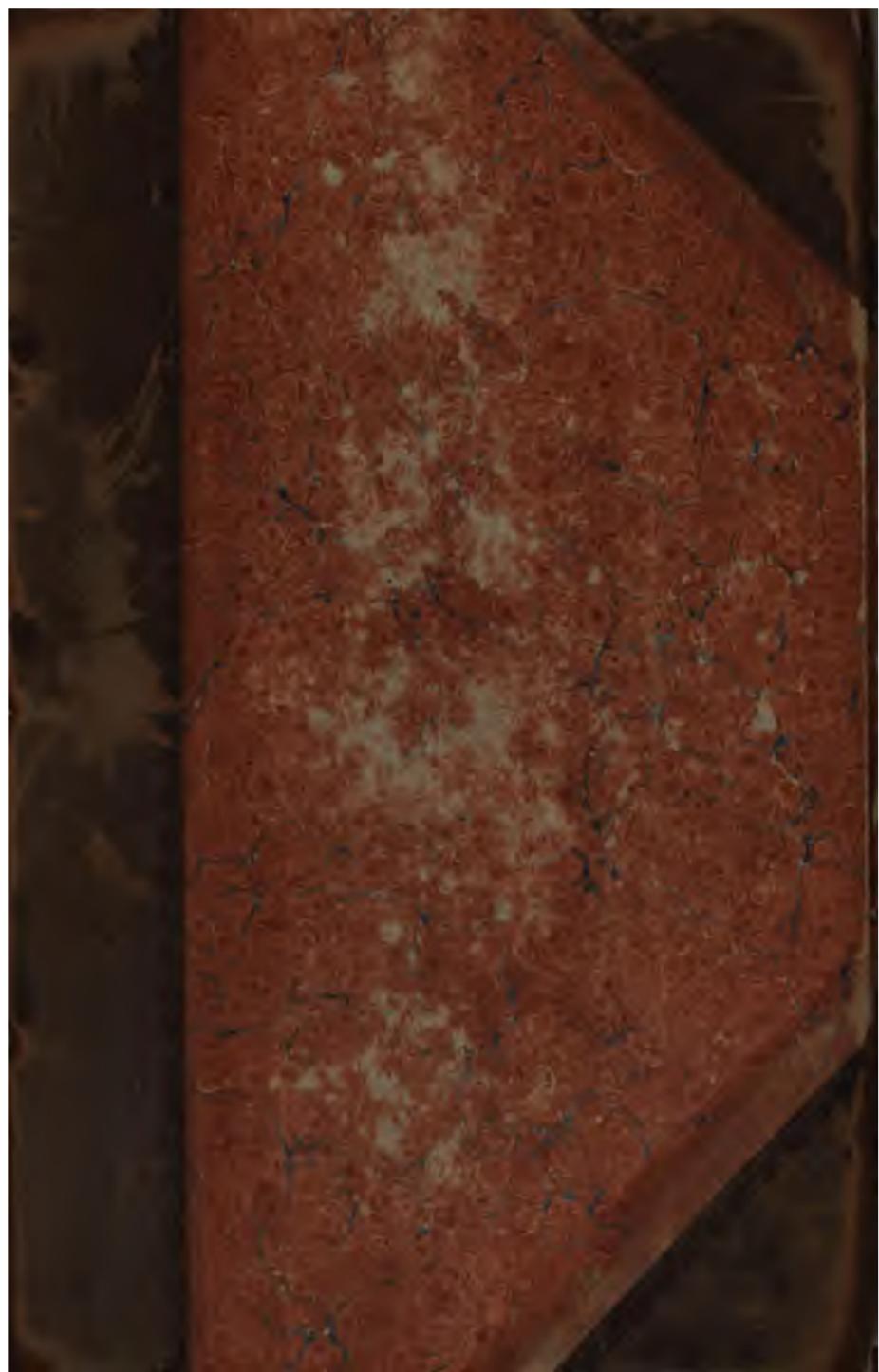
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LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

SEEKEYS, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND

WHOSE MIND HAD LONG BEEN HARASSED

BY MANY OBJECTIONS AGAINST

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND:



BY THE REV. A. S. THELWALL, M. A.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

“ The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the Ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth.”—GEN. viii. 9.

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PREFACE.

THE following Letters were written under circumstances of peculiar interest, which the writer would briefly record. About a year ago, by a remarkable chain of events, which the world would ascribe to chance, but in which the Christian cannot fail to recognise the hand of Him, “whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth,” he was led to renew an acquaintance, which had been interrupted for seventeen years, with one of the play-fellows of his childhood. An event of this kind must always be deeply interesting and affecting ;—especially when a great and wonderful change has taken place in the minds of both parties ; and the Truths of genuine Christianity, which had before been utterly neglected and despised, have been in the interval so cordially embraced by both, as to lay the sure foundation of an everlasting friendship. But in this instance the renewal of acquaintance proved of singular importance, as well as interest. The writer of these Letters soon found that his old

friend, though fully established in the knowledge and love of the great and fundamental principles of the Gospel, was at that particular period much harassed and perplexed by conflicting opinions, respecting the Church and Dissent; and greatly needed such information and counsel, as could only be given by a decided Member of the Church of England.

Mrs. _____ had been brought up a Socinian, and remained a total stranger to all the important truths of the Gospel, till her removal to a Country Village, in which there was no place of worship but the Parish Church; and in that Church there was nothing to awaken and enlighten her mind, except that provision which the Church of England has so wisely made, independent of anything which can be affected by the personal character and qualifications of the Minister. The Clergyman resided at a distance of several miles, and only visited his Parish on the Sunday, to perform the Morning Service; and, even then, his Sermons were by no means calculated to convey any clear notions of Christian Doctrine. In short it is to be hoped that there are but few neighbourhoods, in which an earnest and candid enquirer would meet with so little assistance in the search after Truth. There was indeed but too much reason to complain that, situated as she was, she saw only the worst side of the Church of England. Yet here, where it presented to an intelligent mind its most

unfavourable aspect,—and there was nothing in the conduct or preaching of its Ministers to recommend or enforce its Doctrines,—*the Liturgy*, and *the portions of the Scriptures* appointed for the various Services of the Church, remained; and in simply hearing and reading *these* from Sunday to Sunday, and from day to day, during the period between Advent and Easter, her mind was enlightened to discern all those great and fundamental Doctrines which she had hitherto denied,—Original Sin and Human Corruption, the necessity of a Saviour, the Atonement, the Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Deity and Personality of the Holy Ghost,—and the personal existence of Satan. In consequence of this remarkable change in her views, she was soon after Easter baptized in the Church of England, and became a regular communicant.

Here was indeed the commencement of a blessed change: but the *clear light* and *full consolation* of many of the Doctrines of the Gospel was not yet attained. Without a faithful Pastor, or a single Christian friend, she was obliged to struggle alone through many difficulties and perplexities, which such assistance might speedily have cleared away from her path. Her mind indeed, which had been originally involved in such depths of darkness and such fatal errors, was hindered and perplexed, and her spiritual progress (more especially in regard to *peace and consolation*) greatly impeded by the legal

preaching which she heard—so very different from the clear light and evangelical statements of the Liturgy and the Articles.

About two years after her baptism, however, the providence of God raised up for her a truly Christian Friend, who (though born and bred a Dissenter, and still, in consequence of local circumstances, a member of a Dissenting Congregation,) has yet had, from first to last, the candour and the judgement, to endeavour, by all means in his power, to confirm and strengthen her attachment to the Church of England, and to encourage her to persevere in attendance upon its Ordinances. This kind friend, when he discovered her state of mind, took occasion to recommend such books as were calculated to be useful; and under such guidance and instruction as was thus brought within her reach, she made real progress in the knowledge and love of “the Truth as it is in Jesus,” and was enabled to rejoice in the abundant consolations of the Gospel.

Having been thus peculiarly situated, and totally unacquainted with Religious Society in England, she travelled on the Continent for several years; and at length visited Geneva, where she was thrown, for the first time, into truly Christian Society. Here, however, began her difficulties and perplexities on the subject of Dissent. The few Clergymen of the Church of England whom she found stationed abroad, too closely resembled those in her own neighbour-

hood at home: they seemed to be given up to the pursuits and vanities of the world all the week, and to be Clergymen only on the Sunday. The Established Churches in Switzerland had fallen away into open and avowed Socinianism, and persecuted the faithful remnant, who had come out from among them to form the *Separated Churches* of that country. It was in those *Separated Churches* that the English Christians, whom she first met with, had received their first serious impressions of Religion, after having spent their former years in mere worldliness, and a formal profession of attachment to the Church. These new friends were warm-hearted and zealous Christians, but too ready (like many others who have been placed under similar circumstances,) to draw very rash and hasty conclusions from their own very limited and short experience; and to ascribe those faults to Establishments in general, or to the Church of England in particular, which upon deeper consideration they ought rather to have charged upon themselves, and upon other individuals who, like them, had professed for years to belong to that Church, without ever applying themselves to the examination of its real principles. In consequence of much intercourse with these Christian friends, Mrs. —— was led by degrees to adopt their notions; and to imagine that all the evils which deform the Visible Church were to be ascribed, in the first place, to the practice of *Infant Baptism*,

secondly, to that *want of Discipline*, which allowed many who were not real Believers to partake of the holy Sacrament; and thirdly, to the *Union between Church and State*. The imperfections which cleave to the Church of England (as, indeed, *to every thing here below*,) were exaggerated and made prominent, while its excellences were entirely overlooked; till at length her mind was so filled with doubts and scruples, that she could no longer receive the Communion in the Church, nor bring her children to its baptismal font. Nor should it be omitted, in accounting for her difficulties, that there is too much reason to ascribe a portion of the blame to those Clergymen, and other members of the Church of England, whom she happened to meet with. These, it is to be feared, were but very partially acquainted with the principles of the Church to which they professed to belong, and very ill prepared to defend them.

On her return to England she found nothing to remove her difficulties, or to satisfy her scruples; but rather every thing to confirm her in her impression of the general corruption of the Church of England; from which it seemed that the light and glory, which had shone around it at the time of the Reformation, were totally departed. The strong party feelings which existed among Churchmen and Dissenters tended still more to distress and harass her mind: she knew not where to turn for refuge and for rest: she did not find any Sect with which she could unite,

At the same time the circumstances of her own conversion could not be forgotten ; nor could she entertain, without deep regret, the very thought of quitting that Church, by whose spiritual and scriptural form of worship alone it was, that she had been turned from “darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

It was at this critical period in her Christian history, that her acquaintance with the writer of these Letters was renewed,—when, for nearly two years, she had been so much harassed with doubts and difficulties, that her spiritual progress had been impeded, her peace of mind seriously injured, and even her bodily health materially affected. The circumstances of old acquaintance were sufficient to assure her, that whatsoever the writer might say, in defence of the Church of England, could not arise in any measure from the *prejudices of education*, which had given him a directly contrary bias ; but must proceed from *observation, experience, and study*,—from *deep and inward conviction*,—the result of patient investigation. The knowledge of this fact gave, doubtless, additional weight and interest to the arguments which were adduced : and it may probably do the same with some of the readers of this volume. The Correspondence was so far blest, that the writer had the privilege of administering to his Christian Sister, when she visited London, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, in one of our Parish Churches, in which he happened at

that time to be officiating ; and he has since received the most satisfactory assurances, that one who had so long been harassed with objections, and deprived of the consolation and edification of the Ordinances of the Church, is now enabled with rejoicing, and with thankfulness to God, to join in them and partake of them with spiritual refreshment and delight. The circumstance of the Letters being thus attended with a blessing, together with the urgent suggestions of the friend to whom they were addressed, have been the principal inducement to make them public.

The Reader, however, will have the kindness to keep in remembrance, that it is *a real correspondence* which is here laid before him ; not written with any intention of publication—(with the partial exception, however, of the last two letters ; which were not written till the publication was decided on.) It calls therefore for all those candid allowances, without which a private correspondence, when laid before the public, cannot be fairly appreciated, or even understood. It is hoped that the nature of the objections will always be sufficiently intelligible from the answers given ; especially if taken in connection with the foregoing brief statement of facts.¹ The order and

¹ The principal objections replied to in the first four Letters, will be found in "An Exposition of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In Three Parts. By the Rev. H. Dalton." When the writer supposed that this work was little known, he did not intend to have mentioned it by name ; thinking

method have followed, of necessity, the course of the objections which were brought forward; and various digressions which naturally arose, could scarcely be omitted, without entirely re-writing some of the letters. Some pains have been taken in carrying the work through the press, (especially in the addition of a few notes to the latter letters):—yet the writer is so fully conscious of the many imperfections which attend a work of this kind,—especially under *all* the circumstances of the publication, (which it is needless here to detail,)—that he feels himself obliged to request, that his readers will do him the favour to read through the *whole* volume, before they pass judgement upon it:—as it is very probable that particular parts or expressions might be misunderstood, unless taken in connexion with others, which will be found to bear, directly, or indirectly, upon the same points.

But if the volume be taken as a whole, and if due allowance be made for the nature and form of it, it is confidently hoped, that *the principles* upon which the Church is here defended, will be found indeed the very principles of its Fathers and Reformers. And while the writer is well aware, that subjects

that possibly, the less it was brought into notice, the more hope there might be of Mr. Dalton's return to sound and sober views. But having observed that great efforts have been made to give it publicity and extended circulation, he now deems it necessary to mention it distinctly.

might be found, more *generally* useful, and tending *more directly* to Spiritual Edification, he yet trusts that this great object is by no means neglected or forgotten in this work. There is a period in the experience of very many Christians, (and perhaps, more especially at the present time) in which it is of great importance *to spiritual progress and comfort*, that the true principles of the Church of England should be clearly understood ; that difficulties and objections should be soundly and fully answered, in accordance with those principles ; and that the mind should be satisfied upon the question of Conformity. Let it be granted that the whole question of *Ecclesiastical Polity and Discipline* is a *minor* question, when compared with the *great, substantial Doctrines of the Gospel*, to which the first place is so fitly and judiciously given in our Articles :—yet it is a common device of the great Enemy of our souls, to perplex the minds of those who are enquiring and conscientious, with doubts and difficulties and endless reasonings upon this *minor* question ; till those *great* doctrines (and all spiritual Religion as founded upon them) are almost forgotten ; and consequently spiritual progress is entirely checked, and spiritual consolation and delight altogether give place to anguish and distress,—or (which is still worse) to carnal strife and contention about things *Ecclesiastical* (to the utter neglect of things *Spiritual*,) in which all the evil tempers of the old Adam are called into

fearful exercise, to the great dishonour of the Gospel. The Author therefore wishes it to be clearly understood, that this book is published with a real desire and purpose to promote *Spiritual Edification* ;—and he trusts that the manner and spirit in which it is written, are not inconsistent therewith, or unsuited to that end.

But this is not all: In an age which is characterized by the multitude of vague, inaccurate, fanciful, and even contradictory notions, which are maintained and propagated by various persons,—all of whom, it is hoped and trusted, are at heart really pious men, —the Minister of Christ (who is really anxious for the spiritual edification and comfort of immortal souls) is not unfrequently encountered by persons, who tell him, in great distress, that on a great variety of points, more or less important, ‘ *This* good man says one thing, and *that* good man says the contrary ;’ and they know not which to believe. They have not leisure for much examination or enquiry ; and they feel themselves wholly unqualified to judge between them. If such a Minister should undertake to decide (not to mention that it might seem in him very arrogant so to do)—it would in all probability only increase the difficulty and distress under which such persons labour: for they would go away, saying, ‘ Well then, here is a third, who differs from them both ! What are we then to believe ? All bring texts and plausible arguments from Scripture, each to prove his point ! Is then everything unsettled and

uncertain ? Is there no arriving at Truth ? Is there no voice to which we may listen, as superior in authority to the individual opinion of this or that good man, though inferior to the divine and infallible authority of the Sacred Scriptures, and duly subjected to the word of God ? so that it may fairly be considered as affording a satisfactory confirmation of the views which, as plain and humble Christians, we have gathered from the perusal of the Bible ;— as warning us to suspect ourselves, and re-examine, when we are going astray ; as deciding between those Ministers, to whom we should, on all such points, be glad to look for instruction, but that we find continually how widely they differ ? What *should* be replied to such humble and distressed enquirers ?

The author would reply in the words of our twentieth Article. He would say, that in humble subjection to the word of God, (as always the *final* authority to which we must appeal,) it will be profitable and consolatory to the humble Christian to “**HEAR THE CHURCH**”—to listen to the voice of that holy, universal Christian Church, which is indeed the faithful spouse of Christ, and while she renders all honour and obedience to her Lord, and humbly worships Him, (Ps. xlv. 11.) yet may justly expect her children to honour her as a Mother: for as such He Himself describes her, (Prov. vi. 20—22, with Isa. liv. 1—5, Rev. xii. &c.) And of *this holy, universal, Christian Church*—which embraces all those particular Churches

which maintain pure and Apostolic Doctrine, or have in ages past maintained it—it is one grand object of the ensuing Letters to prove, that *the Church of England* may be fitly considered and honoured, as (both in Doctrine and Ecclesiastical Polity,) *the best and purest Representative that exists.* The humble Christian therefore may, under God's blessing, expect peace and satisfaction, edification and comfort, in cleaving closely to that Church; in attending diligently upon its ordinances; and in listening to its authentic declarations, as well suited to give him the information which he needs, and thereby to relieve him from the perplexities occasioned by the contending statements of different Ministers;—whose wisdom it would be to keep more closely and conscientiously to the statements and expressions of the Church to which they belong. If the author should succeed in establishing any of his readers in a more decided and intelligent attachment to the Church of England,—he conceives that, in regard to the distress and perplexity above alluded to, he shall have done something really important to their spiritual edification and comfort.

It may be right to mention further, that this volume is published with reference only to those *who are, or have been, members of the Church of England;* and may therefore be supposed to have, from their own knowledge and experience, some such acquaintance with its Ordinances and Formularies, as may

prepare them to receive what is here advanced in its favour. The case of those *who have been born and bred in strict principles of Dissent*, has not been at all before the mind of the writer in preparing the work. If any *such* should think that in any part of this volume, less allowance is made for *their* feelings and prejudices than might have been wished, it is hoped that this explanation will suffice. If the Author were addressing himself *to them*, he would endeavour (without shrinking from his own principles) to make every candid allowance for the circumstances in which *they* have been placed; but which cannot be fairly pleaded for, or expected, by those whom he *here* addresses.

On most questions which now agitate the public mind in reference to the Church, the views of the writer are fully and clearly expressed, in one part or other of this volume. *Here*, however, he would make one additional observation; namely, this,— That those who are disposed very strongly to insist on the Rights of Conscience in *their own case*, should be very careful to consider and respect *the Consciences of others*. For example, in claiming admission to our Universities, (which, be it remembered, are *National Institutions*, only because the Church to which they belong is a *National Church*: and the instant that Church ceases to be *National*, the Universities, of course, must cease to be *so* too,) what do the *Dissenters* less, than impe-

atively demand, that *our* Consciences, as Churchmen, should in this matter entirely give way to *theirs*? Is this right or reasonable? So also, in regard to their marriages, they evidently consider no one's conscience but their own:—yea, they act as if no one had a conscience to be satisfied but themselves. But in such a weighty and important Relation as the Marriage bond, and in regard to every thing that tends to give it sacredness and solemnity, it is not the conscience of *individuals* which ought to be considered, but the conscience of the *Nation at large*,—of the immense majority of its population, which, for many generations past, has been fully satisfied with the manner in which Matrimony has been solemnized in the Church of England; and, in connection therewith, has held God's Ordinance of Matrimony in higher respect and honour than any other Nation. Set aside that manner of Solemnization which has so long been held in honour,—introduce various forms, according to the *conscience*, or rather *fancy*, of this or that individual,—and generations must pass away, before those forms can be held in the same honour, or can equally satisfy the consciences of the vast population of this Country:—even if the inevitable consequence should not be, that the Sanctity of the Marriage bond will thereby receive a wound, in the general estimation of the people, which *never* can be healed; and which once given, can never be deeply enough lamented. Once

more,—in regard to the Union between Church and State, Churchmen do conscientiously believe, that it is *lawful, Scriptural, and necessary*; and that they are bound to maintain it. But, while they do this, Dissenters (who take a contrary view,) have full liberty to follow their own way: they are *protected* in the formation and management of Churches unconnected with the State. What thanks do they render for this toleration? Do they not imperiously demand, that our Consciences should give way to their dictation? Do they not openly declare, *that they will never rest*, till they have compelled us to give up that, which *we* in conscience feel ourselves bound to maintain? *We suffer them, unmolested, to have their way*: but *they will not suffer us to have ours!* Is there not, then, good reason to say—Let those who clamour so much about Conscience, be *less* disposed to insist upon *their own* rights, and *more* considerate of the rights of *others*: or else, instead of any title to the honour that belongs to *those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake*, they will rather secure to themselves the shame and condemnation which belong to *persecutors and oppressors*.

To conclude; the writer of these Letters is not unmindful, that had he entered upon a *full* defence of the Church of England, he might have ascended to a far earlier period of her history, than the time of the Reformation; but throughout this volume he has deemed it best to refer continually to *that* period, as

that at which the Church of England assumed its present particular form and position, and shone with its brightest lustre. *Then* it was that it supplied the greatest number of those bright examples, which he desires to propose to the imitation of his readers. And while he takes the highest ground in defending this Church,—and is fully prepared to stand by it *as it is*, in resolute opposition to all innovations,—he trusts it will be found, that there is nothing in this volume to flatter those who are *inconsistent* Members of it. He is convinced that we live in perilous and awful times. *Now* more especially he feels, that *the name of Churchman* will avail us nothing. Yea, *before long* it may expose us to direct persecution. It behoves every one therefore, to take heed that he rest not in *the name*, or in *a formal, outward profession*; but that he enter cordially, and spiritually into all the Doctrines and Services of the Church, and that he become an humble and faithful disciple and follower of those Reformers and Martyrs, who endured chains, dungeons, sword, and fire, to secure and bequeath to their posterity the privileges and blessings which we now enjoy.

Pentonville,

Jan. 30, 1835.

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ERRATA.

PAGE 36, line 15, *for* warm *read* warn.

— 76, — 13 *from the bottom, delete* it.

— 84, — 8, *for* suitably *read* entirely.

— 138, — 3, — John xx. — John xv.

— 144, — 14, — has such — has set such.

— 155, — 11, — (') — (¹)

— 205, — 4, — various — serious

— 223, — 11, — Matt. iv. — Matt. ix.

— 238, — 12, — Minister — Ministers.

— 315, — 6, — employed — implied.

— 319, — 7, — is — are

— 328, — 3 *from the bottom, for* due afterwards, *read* afterwards due.

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS.

March 5, 1834.

**MY DEAR SISTER IN THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST,**

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, since I heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to the Saints. And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgement: that you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Amen.

I was much interested to hear from yourself in what a wonderful and gracious way the Lord had led you to Himself. At such a time as this, it is peculiarly sweet to hear of His blessing on our truly excellent and evangelical Liturgy. And I do hope and trust that, notwithstanding many and great difficulties which you feel at present, you will not forsake your dear mother, the Church, (as our excellent Reformers used to speak) at a time when she so much needs the love and prayers of all her children. How happy should I be, if I could suggest anything that might, under God's blessing, be the mean of relieving you from your difficulties and perplexities! but as I have not yet received the 'Treatise on the Lord's Supper,' to which you refer, it would perhaps be premature to write on that subject at present. But I may say that, for myself, I am a very high churchman; and much opportunity of observing the state and system of other churches has made me so. I do indeed greatly lament the want of discipline, and enter fully into the views and feelings of our Reformers, as expressed in the introduc-

tion to the Communion Service. But here the fault rests entirely with the ministers and people of the present day; who (as is manifest from an examination of the rubrics) have carelessly and indolently fallen into utter neglect of that discipline, which is a part of the constitution of the Church. And most needlessly: for I know an excellent minister who, in his own parish, strictly enforces the discipline of the Church,—in a very mild and judicious, but in a very effectual manner;—insomuch that among from one hundred and fifty to two hundred communicants, he has not so much as *one* coming to the table of the Lord, whom he would not wish to see there.

Then, my dear sister, if others neglect their duty (which we cannot possibly help) let *us* not therefore neglect *ours*. Our gracious Lord hath said, “Do this in remembrance of me;” and by this precious commandment he has made our *privilege* to be our *duty*. Let not the enemy of souls so far prevail against you as to make the sins of others, in presumptuously taking that to which they have no title, an argument to prevent *you* from

partaking of a privilege and discharging a duty at once. Are the children of God to be debarred from coming to His table till the Church on earth is free from formal professors and hypocrites? that is, till the tares have ceased to grow among the wheat? yet this is what your objections will bring you to, if you look into them closely: and thus you will find that, by proving too much, they prove nothing. For the Church of Christ upon earth is *one*: and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is *one*. We partake of it, not as individuals,—not as separate congregations,—but as members of the universal Church of Christ—even as though all Christians upon earth sat down to *one* table. If therefore, in your own church or chapel, all were believers and worthy partakers—still the ordinance of which you partook would be profaned by the unbelievers and heretics who laid rash hands upon the outward visible signs in other congregations; and would not your objection to receiving the ordinance, though less visible, be equally valid? It is well indeed that we should mourn over the wicked,

who receive the sign of so great a thing only to their condemnation ; but why should the presumption of the wicked shut out God's children from a feast which is peculiarly their own, and of which they alone *can* really and truly partake ? Why should we not simply obey our gracious Master's command, and unite with all his faithful people in feeding upon his body and his blood, notwithstanding all the folly and wickedness of the wicked, which can only hurt themselves ?

When I sat down to write, I did not intend to have entered upon this subject, as I am yet so imperfectly acquainted with your views and your difficulties : but the time is short, and before I can find opportunity to write again, the season of Easter may have come upon us ; and I am grieved to think that you should do so much wrong to yourself, and to them also who are fellow members with you of the mystical body of Christ, as to abstain, through needless though specious scruples, from that blessed ordinance in which you and they should be refreshed and comforted together, as "one bread and one body ;" even as

“ we are all partakers of that one Bread.” If these hints should not suffice to satisfy your mind, do let me hear from you again, and I will endeavour to write more clearly and fully. You have so few gospel privileges, that it is doubly desirable that you should not deprive yourself of that blessed ordinance.

I cannot here enter upon the question of the union between Church and State, more than just to say, that the whole of the Old Testament is clearly in favour of it; and there is nothing against it in the New. And, when I look at the history of the Church, it is very clear to me, that both the general voice of the universal Church of Christ, and the Providence of God are in favour of it too. I will endeavour to send herewith a few tracts which bear upon the questions now at issue respecting the Church of England; and some hints you will find in my volume of Sermons; as also upon the subject of Prophecy, which would require of itself a long letter, in order to put you into any thing like full possession of my views. I am not however disposed to lay so much stress upon the subject as some of my brethren; nor

am I satisfied with any of their systems. I desire to be found waiting upon God in a very humble and childlike spirit, till He is pleased to unfold His own plans, into which (as far as relates to the times and seasons) I cannot see very far.

March 27, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND SISTER IN
CHRIST JESUS,

“Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

I have read with care and attention the first two numbers of Mr. D——’s Treatise on the Sacrament, which you were so kind as to send me; and I have discovered so much of serious error in it, that I could not but feel in some measure distressed and alarmed, when I called to mind some expressions in your letter respecting this work.

And now, my dear Sister, before I proceed, I must ask, whether you can so far see the

hand of a gracious God in the renewal of our acquaintance under such peculiar circumstances, as to be disposed to look for a blessing upon it? Can you believe that the Lord has ordered it in the best and fittest season, and in love and mercy to your soul; so that you can look to Him in faith and prayer, to make me his instrument in bestowing some of those instructions and benefits, which His children may expect through the instrumentality of His faithful ministers? When I consider the latter part of your letter, in connection with the little treatise you have sent me, and with some points to which my mind has of late been especially directed, I am led to hope that our acquaintance has been renewed at an important period; and this impression I found had been made yet more strongly upon the mind of our dear friend Mr. H. If you can also discern in it the hand of Him who does all things wisely and well, I shall write with the more confidence. May the Holy Spirit be with me when I write, and with you when you read!

Mr. D—— is, I understand (not only from

his book, but also from other sources) in many respects a very amiable and excellent young man ; but he is very young and inexperienced, and is at present an occasion of great lamentation to his best and kindest friends, on account of his having drunk deeply into all the specious delusions of Mr. Irving's awful system. You could therefore scarcely do worse than take him for a guide and instructor in spiritual things :—for (as he is himself among the deluded and beguiled) even those amiable and excellent qualities which he possesses, are likely to make him a more dangerous instrument in misleading others, than if the errors and delusions had originated with himself.

We live in very strange and awful times : in which the most fearful errors and delusions are maintained and propagated by those, whom we should be very sorry to speak or think of otherwise than as Christian brethren at heart, however their minds are overclouded with error for the present. Now then, if ever, it behoves us to lay to heart our Saviour's warning : “ Take heed that no man deceive you.” (See the whole context, Matt. xxiv. 4—13.)

I had not read many pages of Mr. D——'s tract before I began to suspect that he was an Irvingite. But in the third number he comes out openly and undisguisedly with all Mr. Irving's errors—and that with such an exact imitation of his style, that one might almost think one was reading pages of Irving's own writings. These errors I have so fully discussed in my sermon on the Incarnation, and the notes upon them, that I need only to refer you to those. And may the Lord give his blessing while you read them !

Mr. D——'s views on the sacrament partake of the same errors, which run through the whole system that he has embraced. But there are some particular errors in his views on that subject, which I will endeavour briefly to point out.

The grand and fundamental error seems to be, (and it is a very common one with those who censure the Church of England,) that in his anxiety to exclude from the Lord's table those who have no right to it, he takes no care about including in this blessed communion all those who have : indeed, he seems little care-

ful how many of God's dear children, (and even those who most need the help and comfort of the ordinance,) he might practically exclude along with them. This is utterly subverting the Scriptural order of things. I am no advocate, (as I have already told you,) for the total neglect of discipline. I lament the utter want of it in so many churches. But I must always remember that the sacrament is a feast and an ordinance for the refreshment of *God's children*. To *them* it peculiarly belongs. And our first care must be, that they may *all* freely partake of it, and enjoy it, until by open sin they compel us to deprive them of it. But it is better that hundreds of the children of this world should partake of the outward visible sign, (which is all they *can* partake of,) than that one of God's hungering and thirsting children should be deprived of the inward spiritual blessing which we expect thereby. Let us remember too, that the table and the feast are *ours*. The ordinance belongs to *us who believe*. *We* only *can* indeed partake of it. *We*, partaking thereof, do manifestly declare that we are all

one bread and one body. We profess to hold communion with the whole multitude of believers, with all the members of Christ. And we really do hold communion with them, and with *them only*, when we partake of the ordinance. We do not, we cannot communicate with the unbelievers, nor do we profess to do so, even though they should kneel down at the same table with us : for the principle and bond of communion is *faith*, which in them is wanting. They indeed too frequently presume to join *us* in the outward form, and in so doing, commit an awful sin, and make a false and hypocritical profession of uniting with God's children in a most solemn ordinance. We lament this, both because they are deeply deluding themselves, and because the visible signs of sacred things are thereby profaned by their unhallowed hands. But it is not possible by any discipline, to exclude them *all*, (as Mr. D. is compelled to admit,) and in fact, *the worst and most specious hypocrites* will be the last persons whom we could possibly exclude. But, blessed be God ! that, though these things are to be lamented, the ordinance is

not thereby destroyed ; it still remains, to all God's children, the true sacrament of Christ's body and blood. If we come in faith, and in obedience to our Lord's command, (Luke xxii. 19.) we still partake of the real sacrament, and may confidently expect the blessing, in common with the blessed company of all faithful people.

Mr. D—— is quite wrong in his reasonings about Judas and the parable of the tares. It is evident from Luke xxii. 19—22, that Judas *did* partake. It is equally clear from Matt. xxvi. 21—28. that (so far from his treason being among the secret things of our Lord's omniscience) *all* the disciples knew that a traitor was among them, and some of them knew the person. And the *tares*, which were not to be rooted up grow “among the *wheat*,” (Matt. xiii. 25.) i. e. in the visible Church. It is not merely said that they were sown, “in the *field*,” (which is the world,) but “among the *wheat*,” in the kingdom of the Son of man. A more particular consideration of this parable would still more strongly confirm this view: for the *tares* signify more

especially, *those specious hypocrites*, whom it is always very difficult, and often impossible, to discern from true believers.

Again, he is quite wrong in maintaining that none should come to the sacrament, who have not attained to a full assurance of their interest in Christ. I have ever insisted on the necessity of pressing forward to a full assurance, from my first entrance into the ministry. Indeed, the very first day that I ever had a just notion what true religion was, I considered full assurance as belonging to it. But I see plainly, that many of God's dear children must wait, and strive, and suffer long, before they attain to this privilege. And the sacrament is a blessed mean of helping them forward to it. And alas ! how would Mr. D—, by insisting on it as he does, in many cases "break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax ?" depriving those very persons of this blessed ordinance, who most needed it. Oh ! if there be but a simple principle of humble obedience to our Lord's command, (Luke xxii. 19.) and an hungering desire after this blessed ordinance, amid many

remains of darkness and perplexity, how joyfully should the minister of Christ encourage the feeble and the mourners to come to this ordinance, with a full trust in God's mercy ! and how often, in the ordinance, has God given them the full assurance, that they were the objects of that mercy.

Another common mistake about the Sacrament is this. The holy Scriptures, and our Church in exact conformity therewith, insist primarily and mainly, that a man should *examine himself*, and so partake. (1 Cor. xi. 28.) And nothing can be more solemn than the manner in which the Church of England charges every one to do so. But many would put the business of examination into the hands of the minister ; and some would put it into the hands of the congregation at large ; who hereby are very apt to be led into examining *others*, when they ought to be examining *themselves*. This again is turning things upside down ; and there is a good deal in Mr. D——'s tract which I fear, in its practical tendency, could only foster this error. I am far from setting aside the duty (often very difficult as well as

painful) of administering Christian warning, admonition, and reproof. But let us put things in their right places, and give the first place to that which is most important: as the Church of England has been most careful to do. And let not the Church be blamed for the negligence of some who profess and call themselves her ministers and children, when they know nothing (and will know nothing) of her real principles.

To conclude: the commandment of our dying Lord, “Do this in remembrance of me,” is as plain and positive as any precept of the Decalogue. It is binding upon all God’s children; nor do I know how any one, who even desires to be numbered with Christ’s people, can neglect it without guilt. The whole matter of discipline is (as Mr. D. frankly confesses, and as all Churches, in all ages, have found it in practice) a matter of *inference*, attended with many and great difficulties,—not of *positive declaration*: and the exercise of discipline surely belongs to the pastor; not to the individual members of the flock. Judge then, I beseech you, my

dear sister, whether any difficulties, or any painful circumstances connected with the subject of discipline, can absolve you from the duty of obedience to our Lord's express command? or justify you in absenting yourself from that table, which God is pleased to spread for the comfort and refreshment of His children; and where He Himself, in all the fulness of his love and grace, is waiting to receive and bless you?

I have touched upon some of the errors in Mr. D——'s treatise. How far and wherein I should agree with him, you will readily perceive from my Sermons X. and XI. (the latter part) on 1 Cor. xii. 13, 14; and x. 16. It is however to be observed, that while he speaks very delightfully in some places, about Christian union,—the practical tendency of the work (and of the whole system he has embraced) is evidently to multiply schism, and dismember the body of Christ: which we should be especially careful to avoid.

Before I close this, let me ask, whether you are at all acquainted with the Homilies of our Church? or with any of the works of our Reformers and Martyrs?

April 10, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND SISTER IN
THE LORD,

“ Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Amen.”

I was much relieved and comforted by receiving your last letter; as I find that, however we may differ on some minor points, you are quite clear from the specious but awful delusions of Irvingism; and it is (as I *hoped*, but could not feel *sure*, till I heard from you again,) that you have read the third part of the treatise you sent me, without understanding it, but willing to put a more favourable construction upon it than it will really bear. To the refutation of Mr. Irving’s errors contained in the notes to my volume of sermons, I have received so many testi-

monies from the wisest and most experienced Christians, that I can say with full confidence, you may rely upon the soundness and clearness of the views therein set forth : and I am now about to publish what I have written on that subject as a separate tract, in the hope that, in that form, my refutation of Irvingism may have a more extensive circulation, and be more useful, than merely as forming part of a large volume.

I am afraid, my dear sister, that in your present feeble state of health, some of the discussions into which I have been led in my last two letters, have only served to give you pain and trouble, when I was most desirous of giving you help and comfort. Let us not pursue this subject, while you are unequal to it. There are points enough on which we can cordially and entirely agree. And I trust the Lord has given me grace to think of you, and write to you in Christian tenderness and sympathy, even when I think that you are decidedly wrong. I know what spiritual trials and conflicts are, both by personal and ministerial experience : therefore be not afraid to

write openly and candidly to me, as you have done, even when you fully expect that I shall differ from you. When I consider the circumstances in which you have been placed, I am not surprised at all that you should be in perplexity and temptation, or even error, on some points. Let us rather adore the grace of God, which has so far guided you aright, and trust that in due time we shall be enabled to see eye to eye, even on those points respecting which we differ at present. I am sorry that the Christian friends you mention should have introduced such points of controversy to your consideration: nor can I think that they have acted altogether with Christian kindness and consideration in so doing. But those who dissent from the Church of England, have commonly such a restless spirit of proselytism about them, that they have no consideration of times and seasons; but must bring forward the points of *difference*, when, in reason and charity they ought to be content to keep close to those of *agreement*. I gather from what you have written, and from what I have heard from our dear friend Mr. H. that you can

know but little of the religious world as yet. Let me therefore entreat you to be on your guard in reading modern books, and in conversing with the Christians you may meet with. Many take to themselves that sacred name at present, who are but hollow professors,—who can talk very speciously and plausibly; but *there* their religion ends. Others who are truly children of God, are yet by no means to be trusted as guides, in any respect or measure: and some of those who are least fit to lead you, will yet be most diligent and urgent in their attempts to do so. It is very painful to be obliged to warn you against *brethren*: but I know enough of the fearful state of the religious world at present, to feel an absolute necessity of so doing. I have had pretty extensive opportunities of observing the real state of religion, and its professors, both at home and abroad, and I can assure you that the state, not only of the mere professing Church, but of the real Church, is awful and lamentable in the extreme. Never, I really believe, was the body of Christ in such a sickly and languishing condition before.

Do not think that I am confounding the Church of England with the Church of Christ; or that I fall into the mistake of speaking of the former when I ought to speak of the latter. You must, my dear sister, have wholly misunderstood many passages in my sermons if you think so; or if you imagine that I am in any measure blind to the evils at present existing in the Church of England. I see them in so awful a light that, if God should suffer His enemies and ours utterly to lay us waste and desolate, I am fully prepared to justify *Him* in his most tremendous judgements. But I distinguish between the Church of England, and that which usurps and arrogates to itself the name. I distinguish between the real principles of that Church and the misrepresentations of its avowed enemies on the one hand, and the evils which have been fastened upon it by its pretended friends and supporters on the other. What the Church of England really is, must be learned from a careful examination of its Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy, and from the writings of its fathers and confessors. Abuses (to which all human

administrations, even of that which is most excellent and divine, must of necessity be subject) and which are in no respect sanctioned by its principles and constitution, are no part of the Church, nor do they afford any reason for separating from it.

You acknowledge, my dear sister, that situated as you now are, you see the worst side of the Church of England. Yet that Church has provided such means of spiritual instruction as have proved to you (though placed under the most unfavourable circumstances possible) under God's blessing, the salvation of your soul! Oh, my dear sister, let not this for one moment be forgotten! Is there another Church under heaven which can produce such a wonderful case? And yet in the Church of England it is not singular, nor even rare. Other similar instances have come within my own knowledge. You are yourself a living monument of the excellence of that Church,—a witness of God's blessing upon it,—even under the most unfavourable circumstances. And can *you* think of leaving it, till you at least have had full opportunity of

seeing the best side of it?—and of seeing something of other Churches too. For then you would find, that though very many attempts have been made by many eminent and zealous Christians, for the last two hundred years and more, to form a better Church,—all these have utterly failed. All have presently been found liable to the same abuses, or much greater. So that men, by endless schism, have run away from excellencies which they could not deny, but not escaped the abuses which they loudly denounced. In our own days indeed, the most excellent and spiritual men who have left the Church of England, after much painful experience, have been glad to return to it again. I beseech you, therefore, to pause. Do nothing hastily in a matter of so much moment. Schism is a great sin. Some of the charges you have brought against the Church of England, you will find, upon further enquiry, to be entirely unfounded. Others are abuses of administration, to which all sublunar things are liable; and which we must be content to lament, without power to remedy or prevent; till we come to a brighter and

more perfect state of things. When you have attained to absolute perfection yourself—when you have no longer any infirmities, imperfections, and corruptions to bewail,—then may you expect to find a perfect Church. Till then, the Church at large, like the individual believer, must cry out with St. Paul, Rom. vii. 21—24. I am persuaded that the time is at hand, when all sound and spiritual Christians will be glad to seek refuge, and consolation, and union in the Church of England. But with these, which are only reasons for pausing, and for caution and calm consideration, which may prepare you in due time for further enquiry, I will dismiss the subject for the present.

I would say the same respecting the Sacrament. The Lord has probably wise reasons, which we shall hereafter discover, for depriving you of that ordinance for the present. In the meantime I will only remark that my main argument, drawn from our Saviour's express command, Luke xxii. 19, you have not noticed at all in your answer. Nor does any thing you have mentioned in the least set that aside.

us not set one part of God's word against ther. When we do so, we may be sure t we err. And when the Lord so plainly aks, our only wisdom surely is, not to ion and object, but to believe and obey.

May 7, 1834.

“ Now the God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus”—(*after that you have suffered awhile*, my dear friend and sister in the Lord,) “ make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Oh how true it is, and witnessed by the experience of every believer, that “ we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The trials and sufferings appointed us are indeed wonderfully diversified, according to the infinite wisdom of our heavenly Father, who knows all our circumstances, and all the peculiarities of our characters and situations,—who is unsearchable in wisdom, and knows both what we need, and what His grace will enable us to bear. But still it

remains, a solemn and affecting, yet a blessed truth, that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom He receiveth.” Therefore, my dear sister, though I deeply and truly sympathize with you, and can assure you that my dear wife does so too (who could scarcely read the latter part of your last letter without tears), and though I have been distressed that I could not write to you sooner, if it were only to assure you that I did sympathize with you; yet, now that I do write, let me call upon you to rejoice that you have (in such manner and measure as seems best to Him, who doth all things wisely and well) this mark and token of your adoption into His family, that you are called to endure chastisement and affliction. Therefore “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” And surely it becomes me to speak the more freely and earnestly of the blessings of affliction, because I have so particularly

experienced them myself. And if, in any measure I am enabled to minister to you the words of peace and consolation, and to sympathize with you in your trials and sufferings ; I may call you to behold what God hath wrought, and wrought especially by means of manifold trials and afflictions. For it has often struck me very forcibly, that there is no part of the ministerial office, which, as a natural man, I was more utterly unqualified to discharge, than that of a comforter and sympathizing friend to the afflicted. And yet I bless God that it is a work to which He has particularly called me, and in which He has especially been pleased to bless me. Oh then with what full assurance can I say that “in very faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me :” “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.” Therefore I cannot doubt but that in good time you will find reason to say so too. And who can tell, my dear friend, how soon it may come to pass that in speaking to some who are near and dear to you, you may find the special benefit and blessing of all these questionings,

buffetings, trials, and sorrows, with which now for a season you are harassed and distressed?

I have answered first the last part of your letter, because it relates to points upon which we *feel* alike, and are truly united in *heart*; while on some other we are not yet of *one mind*. But this is the Scriptural order. We must first become of *one heart*, and *feel* the bonds of Christian love, uniting us as members of the same body; before we can expect, in such a state of blindness and imperfection as this, to see eye to eye. And perhaps it will not be amiss still to take up the points of your letter (so far as I can at present) in an inverted order, and to assure you that, so far from feeling hurt or offended by the faithful warnings you have suggested, I thank you much for them; and I trust they may be useful to me, for I know well that I need such. Oh, my dear sister, I am a very poor and feeble creature, not worthy to be called a minister of Christ; and I must entreat you not to think me, or expect to find me, otherwise. I cannot but believe that in my public ministry, both in what I have preached and printed, the Lord

has been with me; and his strength has been made perfect in my weakness. But there is no one point of Christian duty from which I shrink back with more fearfulness and dread, or to which I am more utterly helpless and reluctant, than such faithful reproof and warning as must needs be administered *face to face*, in order to any real exercise of Christian discipline. I am under reproach and almost persecution, it is true, for what my friends would call my *faithfulness*: yet *my unfaithfulness* is in truth one of my greatest sins and heaviest burdens. Therefore I not only thank you for speaking so plainly, but entreat you to pray for me, that both in public and in private “I may open my mouth *boldly* to make known the mystery of the Gospel—that therein I may speak *boldly*, as I ought to speak.” There is not indeed, at present, any special call upon me to attempt this difficult work: I have no opportunity of interfering as to the discipline of the Church; for I have not any congregation of my own, or any regular cure of souls. All that I can do therefore, at present, is to preach the word faithfully, when God opens the door.

Herein I trust that I do earnestly endeavour to follow the example which is set before me in the Homilies of the Church of England: and I trust that, generally speaking, the Lord enables me to be faithful. And perhaps He, in much love and mercy, keeps me back from other parts of the ministerial office, which I am not yet prepared faithfully to discharge: but which I am fully satisfied no one could discharge so effectually as a really conscientious and faithful minister of the Church of England.

My view of the present state of that Church is simply this—That those who think as I do, and are stigmatized by the world as Evangelical, as Methodists, Calvinists, Fanatics, and so forth; and who really cleave to, and endeavour to preach, the doctrines of our Articles and Homilies, are indeed the *real Church of England*. That those who so stigmatize us, and (though perhaps they call themselves High Churchmen) preach (in fact) nothing but a compound of popery and heathen morality, are mere *intruders* and *pretenders*—*Dissenters* of the *worst and most dangerous sort*: and cer-

tainly I would turn them out if I could. If the Lord turns them all out, by an utter subversion of the National Establishment, I shall not be surprised ; but shall glorify Him for His righteous judgements. But to leave the Church on account of them, when I know that I desire and endeavour to be true and faithful to *all* its doctrines, to its *whole* constitution, order, and discipline, as its Fathers and Reformers established it and left it, would not only be utterly preposterous and absurd, but it would be an awful dereliction of duty, a base and treacherous desertion of my post. It would indeed be giving place to evil ; and actually, by act and deed, confessing and granting, in the face of the whole world, that *they* are the Church of England, and not *we* : which is the very notion with which they are deluding and destroying both themselves and others. I will not, and I must not, flatter them in such a delusion : though it would be much more easy and pleasant to the flesh to do so, by leaving the Church, than to stand firm at my post, and testify against them, that *they are not the Church*, and *have no business in it*. It is very

true that I have no power or authority to turn them out: but I will not therefore give up the citadel into their hands. That citadel is *ours*; and nothing but main force shall turn us out. The whole Church of England is *ours*. Its ordinances, its churches, its Liturgy, its sacraments, its privileges, are *ours*. *We* have a spiritual title and Divine right to them; though we have not power to thrust out those intruders, who have no right to them whatever. Let us then see to it, my dear sister, that we do not quietly give up, into the hands and exclusive possession of the children of the devil, those things which really belong to *us* as children of God. Would not this be sad and awful? Would not this indeed be helping them to delude themselves? It is certainly a very easy way to satisfy our own consciences, if we evade the solemn duty of warning them and testifying against them, by withdrawing from the Church of England, and leaving its ordinances, and its churches, and its sacraments to their quiet, and undisturbed, and exclusive possession. But should we not thus give them occasion to say, "Did we not tell

you that they were *dissenters* at *heart* all along?" (which is just what they would say:) should we not do much more to flatter them, that they were true members of the Church of England, (and therewith all that the Church of England declares her true members to be—"members of Christ, and children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,") than by merely partaking of the Sacrament at that table, from which, perhaps, we even know that they ought to be excluded, though we know not how to exclude them. Our duty is to partake of those ordinances, which are really *ours*, in humble obedience to our Lord's command, and to warm *them* who have no real title to them, but are altogether unfit to partake of them, as we have ability and opportunity. If there are any whom we think to be enemies of Christ, we should warn them and admonish them: but how it should be consistent with right and duty, to leave our privileges entirely in their hands, I cannot at all understand.

Let me endeavour to explain yet further, what I feel in my own experience respecting

the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, situated as I am in this vast metropolis. I must either forego the privilege of attending that ordinance at all, or else I must make use of the opportunities I have, though they are not altogether such as I could wish. I must partake of the ordinance in churches, where, at best, I have no acquaintance with a dozen of the communicants ; and therefore I cannot tell who or what the great multitude of those who kneel down at the same Table may be, (more than that, perhaps, they sit regularly under the faithful preaching of the gospel, which may give some comfortable hope as to the larger part of them.) But then I know that the great multitude of God's children are partaking with me of the same ordinance in the same manner, and uniting with me in the very same prayers, confessions, and thanksgivings. For I verily believe that considerably the largest portion of God's people throughout the whole world, are to be found in communion with the Church of England. And having this thought present to my mind, I realize something of the communion of saints, of the vital union o^f

the members of Christ's body, who alone are partakers of the inward spiritual grace in that Sacrament, and with whom alone there can be any *real* union in partaking of the ordinances. This I find to be very sweet and profitable. I am not *much* disturbed by the multitude of hollow professors and unholy livers, who in various places receive also the outward visible sign, (though I know it to be *great*,—and I would very gladly exclude all gross cases if I could)—for I know that they do not, and cannot partake with me of that which is really precious and holy in that Sacrament, nor do I make any profession of having communion with them. For what is professed in that ordinance is, that we hold communion with Christ and His Saints. If I come with repentance, faith, and charity, this is a *true* profession, and I really do hold such communion. If others come without repentance, &c. they make a *false* profession, and therein commit a great sin, which I would gladly prevent if I could. But if I refused, on their account, to partake of the ordinance, it would not mend the matter at all: for I should only be adding my sin to

theirs. All I can do in this important ordinance is, to "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." and thus, by faith, looking above the outward visible signs, for the inward spiritual grace, to realize the communion of saints, from which if I should separate myself by neglecting so blessed a mean of maintaining it, I should (I think) sin against my own soul, and against the whole body of Christ.

You are placed, my dear sister, perhaps you will say, in more painful circumstances than I am; because you know too well that your Minister, and nearly all the communicants in his church, are unconverted. This is certainly very painful and lamentable. Yet that minister (so wisely and wonderfully has our Church provided) can do nothing and say nothing in administering the Sacrament, which is in itself superstitious or unscriptural; but only that which tends to the real edification of the true believer. You may look on him therefore, as a mere instrument. But, if you come in faith, you may look upon him as an instrument in Christ's hand (who works by

what instruments He will) to administer Christ's ordinance to you. And looking above the instrument to Christ, even as, looking beyond the outward visible signs, you look for the inward spiritual grace,—you may, *by faith*, receive a blessing.

And not only in the administration of the sacraments, but even in the preaching of the Word, it is the Christian's privilege and duty to look above the poor unworthy instruments to the **GREAT SHEPHERD** and **BISHOP** of our souls: always remembering that Ministers are to us just what Christ is pleased to make them, and that (whether willing or unwilling, enlightened or ignorant) they are but instruments in His hand. It is true, that for the most part Christ is pleased to feed and instruct His Church by means of enlightened and willing instruments, who can speak out of their own experience: but He is not tied to such. He can declare precious truths by the lips of Balaam, or work His miracles of mercy by the hands of Judas. And did we look to Him in simplicity of faith, we should find that “all things are ours,

whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," or friends or enemies, Ministers that love the gospel, or intruders into that office who hate and despise it; *all* shall be subservient to our comfort and salvation. I have myself, on more than one occasion, received wonderful edification and comfort under the preaching of the most blind and worldly Ministers that I ever happened to hear. And I have met with other instances of the same kind. So that those who think they cannot hear any but a converted Minister, do, in fact, take wretchedly low views of the ordinances, and of the power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in them. Oh ! who shall presume to dictate to Him by what instruments He shall please to work ? Or who shall forbid Him to use a Balaam, or a Judas, or a Demas *now*, for the edification of His Church, and the comfort and salvation of His people ? Hath He not all power, and all authority and dominion both in heaven and earth ? And doth He not make the devils themselves subservient to our joy and salvation ? If then you are so situated that you *can* only attend the ordinances, in a church

where the Minister is unconverted, blind, and even hostile to the Gospel, still wait upon the Great Head of the Church in humble and earnest prayer; and He both *can* and *will* put into the mouth of that Minister the words of warning, reproof, edification, and comfort, which He deems it necessary for you to hear, and which your case requires.

Of course, if it lay within our power and choice, we should earnestly desire that both the Minister and the people with whom we meet for public worship, and in the ministration of the word and sacraments, should be really children of God, and partakers of like precious faith with us. But many things which are exceedingly *desirable*, are not absolutely *essential*. And let us take heed that we make not those things *essential*, which Christ hath never made so: otherwise we may deprive ourselves of many helps and blessings which He freely and abundantly holds out to us; and put ourselves needlessly, (if not others along with us), into the greatest perplexity and distress.

If the Minister were Paul himself, and the

Lord Jesus were not pleased to use him, and bless him to my edification and comfort, what should I be the better? (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) Therefore, even in this case, I should have need humbly and simply to look to Him in faith and prayer. See Article XXVI of our Church, in which there is very much of scriptural wisdom.

If you will read again, and duly consider the Homily, ("Concerning the Sacrament,") from which you have made so many extracts, you will find that the grand point urged is *self-examination*: in regard to which it is a model of faithful preaching. But *discipline* is not the matter in discussion there. You will therefore find it expressly written therein, towards the conclusion, "Thus we, and *not other*, must thoroughly examine, and not lightly look over *ourselves, not other men*: *our own conscience, not other men's lives*: which we ought to do uprightly, truly, and with just correction." For it is an unquestionable historical fact, that our Reformers did *not* look forward to the possibility of exercising strict discipline in the Church. The introduction to the Communion Service in the Prayer Book

plainly declares this: and indeed that whole Service was devised and appointed for this very reason, that strict discipline was not regarded as a point attainable. Our Reformers considered it very *desirable*, but not *essential*. Therefore they gave their most earnest heed to that which is far more important, and indeed *essential*,—which is faithful preaching,—urging every one, with the greatest possible earnestness, to *self-examination*.

If you will look to the Scriptures also, you will find nothing there that makes strict discipline absolutely *essential*. It was a true Sacrament, when our Lord instituted His Supper, though Judas was there, and the other Apostles knew that a traitor was among them. Who shall say that the Sacrament of Baptism was improperly administered, when Simon Magus was baptised? (Acts viii. 24.) And let us remember that the instances of excommunication recorded in Scripture, were all on occasion of very gross offences. At Corinth, it was actually a case of incest. Hymenæus and Alexander had not only sinned against conscience, but made shipwreck of the faith,

and were guilty of blasphemous heresies.
(1 Tim. i. 19, 20.)

Certainly there *is* provision in our Church for the exclusion of such open scandals. See the Rubrics before the Communion Service. And those Ministers who do not act accordingly, have a fearful account to give. But that strictness of discipline which would attempt to exclude *all but real believers* is, I firmly believe, neither practicable nor desirable. The parable of the Tares forbids us to attempt it. The *visible* Church can never, in the present state of things, be exactly co-extensive with the *invisible*. The Court of the Tabernacle (which typified the *visible* church,) was far larger than the Tabernacle itself, (which typified the *invisible*.) Our Reformers saw clearly that really *faithful preaching* must lead the way, in order to any real reformation in other respects. It is equally so now. We need a vast improvement in regard to *faithful preaching*. If we should attempt anything beyond the first elements of discipline, before this takes place, we should do evil rather than good. For *this* therefore let us pray.

I do not think you quite enter into the views of our excellent Reformers in compiling the Liturgy, and setting up therein so high a standard.

But, “ I had many things to write, but I will not, with ink and pen, write unto thee. But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.” I hope, however, that this hasty letter may prepare the way for profitable conversation : and oh, that the Lord may be with us when we meet, and fulfil unto us abundantly His gracious promise, Matt. xviii. 19, 20 !

June 12, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND SISTER IN
THE LORD,

* * * * *

I must now come to your difficulties on the subject of Infant Baptism,—for which you think you can find no express warrant in Scripture. And, if not, who shall dare to forbid it? or to charge all the evils with which the visible Church abounds upon the observance of that, *which is no where forbidden in Scripture*, directly or indirectly,—when so many things expressly commanded in the Scriptures have been neglected, and so many things forbidden have been continually done, which are abundantly sufficient to account for all these evils?

It is evident that in the time of Cyprian, when the Council of Carthage was held, in the year 253 (scarcely 150 years after the death of the Apostle John,—only 86 after that of his

disciple Polycarp) the notion of confining Baptism to adults was *unknown* in the Church. Infant Baptism has therefore been the received practice of the Church of Christ from the time of our earliest records downward. Those, therefore, who oppose it, are bound to produce plain Scripture to forbid it. By which I only mean to say, that when persons oppose any received doctrine or practice of the Church of Christ, the whole burden of the proof (the *onus probandi*) rests properly upon *them*: they do not act fairly or honestly if they attempt to shift the burden from themselves, and cast it upon us. And herein it is, my dear Sister, that your letter is altogether deficient: there is a total want of scriptural argument. You charge the corruptions of the Christian Church, in very strong terms, upon the custom of baptizing infants. But where are the texts or arguments drawn from Scripture by which you support so grave a charge? Till these are produced, will it not be fair and sufficient to meet facts with facts?

The visible Church of Christ is horribly corrupt. It is filled with multitudes of Baptized

Infidels. This is granted. Will it be more deeply and humbly confessed and bewailed by any, than by some of those who are most deeply convinced that Infant Baptism is altogether Scriptural? I think not.

But, if Infant Baptism have been *a main cause* of all these evils, may we not with all reason expect, that those Churches which have rejected Infant Baptism, and professed to baptize none but believers, will have remained, to a very remarkable degree, pure from the general corruption, and exempt from those evils? Surely this ought to be made out *by facts*; before all those evils are so unhesitatingly charged upon Infant Baptism. But is it so? Look at the Baptist Churches in our own Country. Are they preserved from the general corruption? Do they remain pure from generation to generation? Alas! many of these have fallen away entirely into Arianism and Socinianism, (a gulph from which the Church of England has evidently been preserved.) And even in those Baptist congregations in which the Gospel is preached, you will find, even among the baptized and the

Communicants, the same taint of worldliness and infidelity which you point out in the Establishment. The most eminent of their Ministers, in their most favoured Congregations, will mournfully confess that if two thirds of their Communicants are real Believers, it is the utmost that they dare to hope.

I had opportunity when in Holland of gaining some information respecting the Dutch Baptists, or Mennonites, (so called from Menno Simon, their founder, who suffered martyrdom at the time of the Reformation.) These adopted the principles, which you deem so important, in all their strictness. They stood aloof from all connection with the State and Government. They would hold no office or Magistracy. They would not carry arms. Their own principles, even more strictly than those of the Dutch Established Church, forbade them to interfere at all with the secular affairs or Government of their Country. Surely, if strictness of principle, both with regard to Adult Baptism, and the shunning of all political and secular temptations, could have in any measure secured a Church from

the pollutions of the world, and from lamentable decline; we might have expected that the pure Gospel, and the power of godliness, would have continued among the Mennonites from generation to generation. But alas! when I was in Holland, the Mennonites were universally fallen into Arianism and Socinianism; and therewith, into all the pollutions of the world. In 1795, some of them were the ringleaders in selling their Country to the French, and in introducing the principles of that Infidel Revolution, with all its train of abominations, into Holland. I did not hear of a single Mennonite Church in the course of my travels, in which any trace of vital godliness could be found. All the real godliness (and some of it very delightful and exemplary) which I found in the Country, I found in connection with the Dutch Reformed or National Church, which adopted Infant Baptism like our own. One Mennonite Minister was indeed converted to God while I was in Amsterdam, and wonderfully brought out of the depths of Socinianism, in a gradual and most interesting manner. But going on

from step to step, by slow degrees, and through much inward conflict, as he came to the full acknowledgement and faithful preaching of the Truth in other respects; so at length he renounced his errors on the subject of Baptism, gave up his Ministry among the Mennonites, and joined the Dutch Reformed Church.

Thus, then, if we look merely to the actual state of the visible Churches of Christ, *facts* would lead us to a conclusion, even more unfavourable to the principles of the Baptists, than to those of the advocates of Infant Baptism.

The truth is, my dear Sister, that in laying the grievous charge of all the evils which over-run the visible Church upon an error in regard to Baptism, (even if it were proved an error) you are assigning a cause altogether inadequate to the effects. It is the want of *faithful preaching* from the pulpit, and of *evangelical instruction* from house to house, which (in connection with the positive workings of *human corruption*, and the restless activity of the *great enemy of souls*,) must be acknowledged as the main cause of all those evils which deform the visible Church. Those

things (one and all) to which you refer in your letter as occasions of so much evil, a truly wise and faithful Minister of Christ would know well how to improve to the spiritual welfare and edification of his people ; and to the furtherance of the cause of vital godliness. He would feel that they gave him vantage-ground to stand upon in addressing his people,—that they gave him a hold upon their consciences. But everything which a faithful Minister and a real Christian would improve, to the spiritual and eternal advantage of himself and others ; the carnal mind will of course pervert and abuse, to its own delusion and destruction. But we cannot argue against the real excellence and right use of anything from its abuse : for what has been more abused than the Gospel of Christ itself ? There is no doubt or question that Infant Baptism has been abused,—that the Lord's Supper has been abused,—that the connection between Church and State has been abused : and there is just as little doubt, that every thing which was ever yet devised as a substitute for our National Establishment and its

ordinances, has been grossly abused likewise. Moreover, if we know at all what human nature is, we must know that all these things, with every thing else which can be devised, *will* also be abused, through our human corruption and depravity, until the Lord shall come in power to establish a better order of things.

I think that a careful perusal of 1 Cor. i. and ii. and of the Epistles to Timothy, and Titus, will fully establish the views I have here given, of the real causes of those evils which abound in the Visible Church. And surely, if the question of Baptism had been of such importance as your statement would make it, we should have had some warnings on the subject in the Epistles, as distinct as those which we find against various other errors, by which the Church has been from age to age disturbed and corrupted.

I have, you will perceive, said very little about the immediate question of Infant Baptism: for in truth the most important point is, to direct your attention to the *real* causes of the evils which abound in the visible Church. When these are acknowledged, you will be

prepared to look calmly and fairly at the question of Baptism. And then you will readily perceive, that the argument deduced from Circumcision under the Old Testament is unanswerable: not merely because the Sacrament of Baptism under the gospel dispensation, exactly corresponds to that of Circumcision, (which is not properly a seal of the *Mosaic* or *Legal* Covenant, but of the *Covenant with Abraham*, which was manifestly the *Covenant of Grace*, and of a truly spiritual nature: See Rom. iv. 9—12;) under the former Dispensation,—insomuch that in every instance in which the Prophets and Apostles reason with reference to Circumcision, if you insert the word Baptism instead, you will have the spiritual and evangelical meaning of the passage, in its application to ourselves, most clearly brought out: (See Rom. ii. 17—29;) but because, if you deny Baptism to the children of believers under the New Testament, you deprive those children of a privilege, which was vouchsafed to them under the Old; and thus make our privileges under the Gospel, in one important particular, *less* than they were under the Law.

It is very true “that Circumcision and the Law,” i. e. the Ceremonial Law, were put away when Christ came: but it is only with certain limitations that we can say, that “outward ceremonials” were *all* to be put away:—for surely both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, are, “outward ceremonials,” as to the *outward visible sign*;—public worship, and the preaching of the Word, as a regular ordinance of the Christian Church, are outward ceremonials too. And surely if the Church, under whatsoever dispensation, is really and truly *one*,—one mystical body of Christ, then we may fairly reason from the Sacraments under one dispensation, to the Sacraments under another. Does not the Apostle warrant us so to do? 1 Cor. x. 1—17.

I must close this now, for lack of time to proceed. I think I need not say much to prove to you, that I am not prone to yield to arguments of “expediency:” but that, taking the whole Bible for my perfect rule, I am ready to compare every point, of doctrine and practice, with that perfect standard.

July 8, 1834.

I must not attempt at present to write you a very long letter,¹ and yet, my dear Christian friend, and sister in the Lord, I cannot but write you a few lines by the earliest opportunity, to express my cordial thankfulness to God, that He seems to be so graciously delivering you from the difficulties and perplexities which have so long harassed your mind. And if what He has enabled me to write has been made in any measure conducive to so happy a result, I ought to be doubly and ten-fold thankful to the God of all grace.

It is very sweet to be made instrumental in

¹ This brief extract is inserted, partly as a connecting link between the letters which precede, and those which follow it, and partly to account for the long interval between the dates of the foregoing and the next. It contains too a brief statement of a general principle, which afterwards is made use of in replying to various objections.

edifying and comforting God's people ; but the recollections of more than thirty years, and some of these (as I need not tell you) peculiarly affecting, must make it far more than commonly delightful to be permitted to help *you* in your Christian course. The Lord alone be praised and glorified, for all His wonderful ways and dealings with us both.

Very readily shall I embrace some opportunity of endeavouring to answer the questions contained in your last ; but at present I must avail myself of that kindness and consideration, which has led you to entreat me to do so at my leisure ; for I have not much time at my own disposal. For some time back, owing to various causes, I have made but very little progress with my work on Socinianism, and now I am just set to work upon it again in good earnest, and I must not suffer any thing to divert me from it. And I think I may, without any appearance of neglect or unkindness, pause before I enter upon your remaining questions ; as I do not suppose any of them can much or immediately affect *your own* peace and comfort, or your own particular duties. But if I am mistaken

in this supposition, be kind enough to let me know, and I will make the more haste. In the meantime I will just mention a very simple and yet very important rule, which is contained in our XXth Article; that no one, 'may so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another:' for the Scripture is a perfect and harmonious whole, in which one part *often* explains, and *sometimes* limits another; (otherwise we sometimes should be apt to draw too rash and sweeping conclusions from particular expressions, and thus overlook and mar the harmony and proportion of our various duties, or of Divine truth, as a vast and perfect whole.) Perhaps you will, before long, perceive that the general principle applies to some of the questions which you ask, and solves some of the difficulties which they involve.

I should think that both your friends at T—, and your friend W—, whose letter you quote, need on many points a great deal more information than they at present possess; and are not sufficiently aware of their own present ignorance and inexperience. This is

very intelligible ; and a charitable Christian will be far from judging it harshly, in persons of ardent minds and warm feelings. Yet to be humbly aware of our own deficiencies, and of our liability to error, will commonly be a blessed mean of preserving us from many errors, for which otherwise we might smart severely. The compass of Christianity, doctrinal and practical, is so vast ; and we meet with so many difficulties, from within and from without, in learning it aright ; that those who have but just learned the first principles of the Oracles of God are very apt to make great mistakes as to their proficiency ; and to speak too positively on many points, of which they yet know little or nothing ; or even to set up for teachers, when they would find it much more their wisdom, their duty, and delight, to be content to be only learners. James iii. 1,¹ contains a very important warning, and too much neglected.

Perhaps you will find opportunity to give a few hints to your friends on these points. It

¹ " My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

might be doing them the best and truest kindness. Having been in utter carelessness and ignorance respecting religion, and having *now* so far learned the things which belong unto their peace, as to feel something of the supports and consolations of the Gospel, they no doubt appear to themselves to have learned a vast deal. And certainly they have learned a great deal that is very important: but they have not learned everything. Nor have they learned so much, as to warrant them in setting themselves up for teachers in the Church.

August 26, 1834.

MY DEAR SISTER IN THE FAITH AND
HOPE OF THE GOSPEL,

“ Grace be unto you and peace, from God
our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Amen.

I suppose this will find you returned to your own home; and I trust you will be enabled to enjoy much of that quiet communion with God, which is so needful to the peace and health of the soul; and for which you have had less opportunity than you could desire, in your late visits to your friends. Friendship is sweet, and particularly *Christian friendship*, (which, after all, is the only friendship that deserves the name): but the sweetest communion, even with Christian friends, is a very poor substitute for communion with God in the secret exercises of the closet: in which I hope and pray that the Lord may afford you much of His presence and blessing.

* * * * *

This reminds me that the questions contained in your letter of June 24, are yet unanswered.

I was anxious in the first instance to answer, as fully and satisfactorily as time would permit, those difficulties and objections which prevented you from comfortably joining in the Services of our Church. Those which remain seem of less immediate importance *to yourself*; and yet it is desirable that, on all points which come before you, and especially such as are likely to be brought forward in argument by your Christian friends, you should (as far as possible) be fully persuaded in your own mind, and able to render a reason for your opinion.

The point on which there seems to be the strongest ground for the scruples which your friends have suggested, seems to be that of oaths. Yet the following considerations will, I trust, make it sufficiently clear that the Doctrine stated in our Articles, is indeed the sum and substance of that instruction which the Scriptures give upon that subject. ' As

we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James His Apostle; so we judge that Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the Magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity; so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching, in justice, judgement, and truth.' Art. 39. For, if it be seriously considered, the taking of an oath, when taken upon a suitable occasion, with truth and solemnity,—is one of the most solemn Acts of Religion: nor can there be a more solemn acknowledgement of the omniscience and omnipresence of the God of Truth, than is implied therein. Hence it is particularly mentioned, as one of the ways in which the children of Israel were taught and commanded to honour the glorious and immutable Jehovah; "Thou shalt swear by His Name," (Deut. vi. 13; and x. 20.) while on the contrary they were forbidden to swear by idols; (Josh. xxiii. 7.) for this would have been *an act of idolatry*; "How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken Me, and sworn by them

that are no gods :— (Jer. v. 7.) We find also that on various occasions, oaths were not only permitted, but prescribed by the law of Moses: See Exod. xxii. 10, 11; Numb. v. 19; xxx. 2, 10, 13. And such solemn swearing by the Name of the Lord was reckoned such an act of homage and veneration to the only true God, that a promise is actually annexed to it—as to the discharge of other religious duties: “ Every one that sweareth by Him shall glory.” Psalm lxiii. 11.

The matter being thus clear, as far as the *Old Testament* is concerned, and confirmed by abundant examples of the most eminent Saints under that dispensation,—(of which I need only refer to 1 Samuel xx. 12—17; and to Neh. x. 29, and xiii. 25)—it must require very strong and clear declarations indeed in the *New Testament*, to induce us to set aside and condemn as *morally wrong*, what is so clearly taught as *morally right*, in the Old; for the Old Testament is not contrary to the New; nor is there any contradiction in God’s Word, taken as a whole, and including both the Old and New Testaments. There cannot

indeed, be a safer or more important rule, than that laid down in our XXth Article (to which I referred in a former letter)—that the Church may not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another:” neither, of course, may any individual. The only cases in which a different rule was *allowed* under the Old Testament, from what was afterwards *insisted on* under the New, are not only clearly *ascertained*, but also *explained* by our blessed Lord Himself: Matt. xix. 3—9, &c.—[which indeed is only a more clear and full declaration of what was taught under the Old Dispensation by the Prophet Malachi, ch. ii. 14—16; so that the Doctrine of the Old Testament (taken as a whole) is evidently on this point the same as that of the New]. The words of our blessed Lord Himself, “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil, &c.” See Matt. v. 17—19, must satisfy every humble student of Scripture, that His Doctrine, or His Law, is in no one point contrary to, or subversive of that of Moses and the Prophets. And a disposition, on any point, to set the Old

Testament against the New, has always been an inlet to dangerous errors and delusions. It is a common artifice of the worst deceivers and heretics; and real infidelity lies at the root of it. It is our great and precious privilege to know, that God's Word from Genesis to Revelation, is one harmonious and perfect whole; in which one part may be, indeed, much more clear than another,—so that we might overlook or mistake the meaning of some parts, were it not for these clearer explanations: but all is *consistent*, because all is *true*, and given by inspiration of the same faithful and unchanging God.

But to return to the point. It is very true that the declaration, Jer. iv. 2, which you refer to in your letter, and which is also referred to in our 39th Article, was *written* before the rule, Matt. v. 33—37, and James v. 12. But to what period in the history of the Church does it *apply*?—for it is a prophecy. Read only to the end of the verse, and you will perceive that it refers to a period when “the nations (i. e. the Gentiles) shall bless themselves” in the Lord, “and in Him they

shall glory :" which certainly is a grand characteristic of the New or Gospel Dispensation. Accordingly we find, that our blessed Lord Himself sware ; Matt. xxvi. 63, 64, for when the High Priest said, " I adjure thee," it is the same thing as saying, " I put thee upon thine oath," and, in answering, our Lord, to all intents and purposes, answered upon oath. So also His Apostles on solemn occasions use oaths : see Rom. i. 9. " God is my witness,"—ix. 1, " I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."—2 Cor. i. 23, " Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth ;" to which may be added 2 Cor. xi. 10, 11, 31 ; xii. 19 : Gal. i. 20 : Phil. i. 8 : 1 Thess. ii. 5, 10 : 1 Tim. ii. 7 ; v. 21 : 2 Tim. iv. 1 : in all which passages appeals are made to God, which have, more or less distinctly, the nature of oaths. A still more solemn and striking example, perhaps is to be found, Rev. x. 5—7. Shall we then charge the Apostle, writing under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, with sin, and disobedience to Christ's

express command, in all these passages? or shall we rather conclude, that *we* have not rightly understood our Lord's command, when we applied it to forbid *all* swearing indiscriminately,—instead of limiting it to all rash and vain swearing? The distinction is, I think, quite clear. There are *solemn occasions* on which an oath is an act of the highest religious worship; whereby we give due honour to some of the most glorious perfections of the living and true God: and the very nature of the act, as so eminently solemn and religious, implies that on *all common occasions*,—that is to say, whenever it is not thus called for,—it ought to be most scrupulously avoided. And I think the terms used both by our Lord and His Apostle James, when duly considered, will lead us to the same conclusion: for *common communication* is the subject that is more expressly treated of.

I have endeavoured upon this point to answer the more fully the objections you have mentioned, because the discussion of this one point involves, in a great measure, the principles on which all your other questions are to be

answered. The question concerning the Magistracy is not, I should think, one which on re-consideration, will give you much difficulty. How is the office of Magistrates described under both the Old and New Testaments ? See Exod. xviii. 19—22 : Deut. i. 15—17 ; xvi. 18—20 : 2 Chron. xix. 4—11 ; also Jer. xxii. 16, “ He judged the cause of the poor and needy ; then it was well with him : was not this to know me ? saith the Lord.” Rom. xiii. 1—7 : 1 Peter ii. 13, 14, Consider more especially these expressions : “ Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness ; and let them judge the people at all seasons : ” “ Ye shall not respect persons in judgement, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great ; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man ; *for the judgement is God's :* ” “ Take heed what ye do : for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgement. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you ; take heed and do it ; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” And in

the New Testament: “Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the Minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the Minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” “Governors . . . are sent . . . for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.”

What is there in the nature of this office which a Christian might not gladly undertake, in humble dependence upon God? Yea, rather, what is there in this office, which it is not most desirable that real Christians *should* undertake: and for which they only can be fully and altogether qualified? I do not see how James iv. 11, 12. or, 1 Cor. v. 12, 13; can be applied to this subject at all. Nor do I see what need there was of *particular* rules on this subject in the New Testament, when the rules and examples are so abundant in the Old; and it is evident that some of the

most eminent Saints therein mentioned, were Rulers and Governors, or Magistrates. But alas ! when men think themselves too high and holy for those offices in which Moses and Samuel, and David, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, served God and their generation, and so eminently glorified Him, and benefited their fellow men, I really know not what to say to them. They are quite beyond all argument. And I must say that an immeasurable pride seems to me to be at the bottom of it ;—or else a most strange infatuation, which must be traced to the *great Deceiver*. There can be no doubt, but *he* would be very glad to exclude all Christians from Government and Magistracy ; and then the whole world would be governed by his own children ; the promise that Kings and Rulers should be nursing fathers to the Church, would utterly fail ; and the wicked would have all the power and authority in their hands, for the oppression and persecution of God's children, and the suppression of His Truth.

When we consider the nature and impor-

tance of the Ministerial Office, and how highly desirable it is, that Ministers of the Gospel should give themselves "Continually to prayer and to the Ministry of the Word," Acts vi. 4. and 1 Timothy iv. 12—16; it certainly cannot be deemed consistent with entire devotion to their great and blessed work, that Clergymen should be magistrates; but in the same chapter in which the Apostles refuse to "serve tables" (because it was inconsistent with *their* office and Ministry,) we find them giving directions to look out "seven men of honest report, *full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*," to be set over that business which they themselves refused, Acts vi. 3, 5, 6; and we find that a great blessing attended this appointment v. 7. So that the Magistracy being an unsuitable employment for Clergymen, is certainly no argument for its being unsuitable for Christians in general. It is true that we are commanded not to "resist evil," neither to be "partakers of other men's sins,"¹ Matt. v. 39. and

¹ How this text has been pressed into the service,—so as to be made a Scriptural argument *against* any exercise of

1 Timothy v. 22. Yet certainly there are occasions on which the christian is called zealously to resist evil, (1 Tim. v. 20; Titus i. 10, 11, 18; iii. 10, 11; James iv. 7; 1 Peter v. 8, 9; Jude 3:) so that that rule must be considered as having many important limitations; and will be best understood by comparing the whole context in which it occurs with such passages as Rom. xii. 17—28.¹ And the Magistracy by Christians,—I do not at all understand. The Magistrate's office is, to prevent, restrain, and punish the sins of others: which I should think must be one of the best and surest ways of avoiding the evil against which the Apostle warns us in that text. May not those who refuse that office, upon such frivolous grounds, be much more justly charged with being “partakers of other men's sins,”—which they *might* prevent, but *will not*?

¹ Rules are given in the Scriptures, in reference to the whole range of human duties,—both those which are of *perpetual* obligation, and those which from the nature of things can only be *occasionally* discharged; and in different ways and manners, according to the circumstances of the individual. Many of those rules must of necessity be understood with considerable limitations; as those that have reference to almsgiving, and relieving the necessities of the poor and afflicted. These must be limited by the circumstances and ability of the particular person, by the claims of justice (which must first be satisfied, or a man would be giving away that which is not rightfully his own) by

it is worthy of observation, that the example of our Lord Himself teaches us that the rule which He lays down in connection with the expression, “ That ye resist not evil,” (Matt. v. 39, and Luke vi. 29.) is not, *on all*

consideration of the number of persons who have claims upon his bounty; and also by the obvious fact, that sometimes the gift would manifestly do injury to the receiver. Hence the Believer, as a faithful Steward of that which God has committed to his charge, is called upon to exercise much wisdom in the disposal of his property; so that his charity may not interfere with the demands of justice, nor be disproportionate or partial, nor yet defeat its own ends. Charitable and benevolent dispositions, it is evident, should be *always* cherished: but the manner and measure of bestowing our bounty, must be regulated by various considerations. And sometimes it must be withheld altogether—lest our bounty should only be abused, and we thus become (even with our eyes open) “ partakers of other men’s sins.” So also in other points, which come under the same general notion of kindness, mercy, and benevolence; though the rules be given in general terms, and the dispositions they indicate, should be permanent, yet the literal application of the rule must in various cases be limited by other rules and principles, which are equally imperative: otherwise they might defeat their own ends; and kindness or mercy *to one*, might become cruelty and injustice *to many*. The manner in which some rules, which are laid down in general terms in Scripture, must needs be limited

occasions, to be literally observed, (John xviii. 22, 23.) but shews rather what should be *the spirit and disposition* of the Christian, than what should (under all circumstances) be his *outward conduct*. The history of St. Paul

in their application, by consideration of various circumstances, may perhaps be best understood by an instance in which two opposite rules are contained in contiguous verses. Prov. xxvi. 4, and 5. "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Which rule are we to observe? The only answer must be,—sometimes one and sometimes the other, according to circumstances, which must be wisely and prayerfully considered. And so it must be also with various other duties and precepts of Scripture, which appear at first to oppose, but in fact, only limit it, and regulate one another.

But under this notion, that a Christian must not "resist evil," which is urged as an excuse for refusing the Magistracy, the Law, the Army, &c. does there not lie concealed a great deal of sinful indolence? Is not this a mere pretext for the dereliction of some of the most arduous and important duties to which a Christian can be called? For he who thus lays hold of a single precept of Scripture, and so adopts it as to set aside all consideration of other duties of a different stamp, which might limit it, and to which in some instances it should give place; has he not found a very easy method of saving himself a vast deal of trouble, both in studying the Scriptures at large, and in considering

will best illustrate this point, which practically, must be acknowledged to have some difficulties. Under oppression and persecution he shews an eminently Christian Spirit; but this does not prevent him from appealing to the laws, and insisting on his privileges as a Roman citizen, on several important occasions; (Acts xvi. 19—24, 35—39; xxii. 24—29; xxv, 9—11) and it is evident, that both his meek submissiveness and his firmness, the times and seasons, the manner and measure, in which these various duties should be discharged?

It will also be necessary to enquire, whether this principle of not resisting evil, is to be applied to a Christian parent in the government of his family? Is he to resist the evil which he sees in his children, by exerting authority, and by administering due correction? or is he to follow the example of Eli? (1 Sam. ii iii.)

The whole context, Matt. v. 28—48. should be studied in order to understand this expression, "That ye resist not evil,"—and when, and how far it applies. It is not given as a universal rule, but in a particular connection, and with reference to a particular vice,—that of revenge, which had been justified in private persons, by reference to a law (most just and equal) which had been laid down for the execution of justice by the Magistrate. When a private individual is forbidden to take the Law into his own hands, this surely does not forbid Rulers and Magistrates to enforce these Laws, which it is *their* peculiar office and business to administer.

sion in some cases, and his firmness in insisting upon his privileges in others, were alike overruled for the glory of God, and the edification and enlargement of the Church. So also we find that, when unjustly accused, he firmly maintains his own cause; and when brought before Rulers and Judges, he manfully and powerfully defends himself; (Acts xxiv. 1—21; xxv. 6—12; xxvi. 1—29; 2 Tim. iv. 16—18.) So also, in writing to a Christian Church, when it was needful for the warning and edification of the people, he enters at large upon self-vindication, (2 Cor. iii. 1—6; vi. 1—10; x. 1; xii. 19;) though evidently feeling all the while, that it was the most painful and disagreeable duty to which a Christian could be called.

These are examples that there are occasions and methods, in which a Christian may be called upon to "resist evil," even in his own case; and the duties of humble submission, and patient endurance, must give place in a measure, to those of firmness and decision, in maintaining the post, and discharging the office in which the Lord has placed him. Much more then with regard to others.

Surely on all occasions, a Christian will be ready to “ Defend the poor and fatherless :” to “ do justice to the afflicted and needy :” to “ Deliver the poor and needy, and rid them out of the hand of the wicked ; ” Psalm lxxxii. 3, 4. ; which is an especial part of the office of a Ruler and Governor, or Magistrate, Prov. xxxi. 8, 9. Yea, it is that to which we are all called, according to our power and opportunities, Isa. i. 16, 17. And in these duties, not only Magistrates, but Lawyers also, may be very usefully and honourably employed ; and though the profession of the Law was one which I never could endure myself, this was rather from taste than from principle, or, at best, only from looking at the manner in which it is too commonly carried on, rather than at the manner in which a man of real principle and a true Christian, *might* carry it on. I see no reason why a Christian might not serve God and his generation very effectually in that profession. He *might* be a most effectual *peace-maker* ; he *might* prevent a vast deal of strife and a vast deal of fraud and injustice : not to mention that, in the compli-

cated relations of civil society, there are occasions, in which it requires all the profound learning, and practical wisdom, (which can only be expected in one who has made the Law his profession,) to ascertain what is really right and justice, and to protect the ignorant and the simple, the orphan and the widow, from ruin and oppression. All these things may be done, at once with calmness and decision, with kindness and authority, by one who has extensive legal knowledge and practice; when even the man of truest Christian principle, without them, would only make confusion worse confounded, embroil contending parties more and more, or actually do gross injustice, even in his zeal to do right. And doubtless there are many Christian men in the profession of the Law, who are eminent servants of God, and doing real and great good in the ways which I have pointed out, and are the more to be loved and honoured for so doing, because, doubtless, the *temptations* to do otherwise are in that profession very great.

Certainly for those who make a profession of godliness to go to law together, is very

scandalous ; and the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 1—12, teaches us to be ready to endure any loss or inconvenience, rather than bring such a reproach upon the Gospel : but then he evidently leaves us much more at liberty with respect to manifest unbelievers and worldlings. Such persons are only to be restrained by human laws, and the strict administration of them—and when this is evidently the case, the Christian has duties to his family, to the poor and needy, to society at large, and even to the offending individual ; which must sometimes constrain him to adopt a course, which otherwise, and as far as himself alone is concerned, he would gladly avoid. In short he must sometimes “do justice,” as well as “love mercy.” And here, I believe, lies the true solution of many such difficulties, as you have proposed, and which some of your friends seem particularly to feel. The Christian, as a pensioner and dependant upon mere mercy, should always be disposed to act upon the principles of love and mercy : but it must not be forgotten that *righteousness* is also a Christian virtue : he must remember that this is some-

times to be exercised ; and he must take heed lest sometimes his disposition to shew *mercy* should lead him to do, or connive at, *very gross injustice*, (and in the end *great cruelty*,) which, by a firm determination to maintain the rights of *Justice*, he might have avoided or prevented. For, in truth, *real Justice*, in its greatest severity, is nothing else but *kindness and mercy to Society at large*.

I may perhaps appear in all this to have wandered from the consideration of any one particular question which you have proposed, but I trust I have only been stating those general principles which involve the solution of all the difficulties you have mentioned. The sum of all is this ; that, as members of families and societies, of a Church, and of a nation, the *relations* in which we stand are very complicated and various ; and so also are the *duties* to which we are thereby called, and it requires much wisdom, and much grace to discharge all our diversified duties in due measure and season. In regard to *ourselves*, we should always be ready to carry the duties of meekness, forbearance, humble submission

and endurance, mercy and forgiveness, to the utmost extent ; but in regard to others, and in order to do our part in maintaining the peace and order of society, we must frequently exercise firmness, righteousness, authority, and sometimes even severity, (which in our own personal concerns we should shrink from;) lest in the most fearful manner, we should become, “partakers of other men’s sins,” by conniving at evils which we have power to prevent or expose, and encouraging the wicked in their evil ways, by a kindness and leniency to *them*, which is cruelty and injustice to *mankind at large*. Hence the magistrate in his public capacity, “is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil ;” (Rom. xiii. 4.) and this does not at all interfere with the love, and mercy, and meekness, which he cultivates, as a Christian, in his private character : for he has, as a public officer, to consider what is real kindness *to his Country and to Society* ; and he will sometimes find that he can only shew *kindness to the community at large*, by exercising *severity upon offenders*. And it is *his* especial duty, in his

public station and character, to consider the welfare of *his Country and of Society*, and to shew kindness and love to *the Community at large*; even when this cannot be done in any other way than by strongly coercing, or severely punishing, the wicked *individuals* who are the disturbers of its peace and happiness. And what can be conceived more suitably accordant with the spirit and design of Christianity, than to exercise kindness and benevolence upon this vast and extensive scale: by promoting and securing the peace and welfare of a whole neighbourhood, or of a great nation.

The same considerations fully justify *defensive warfare*, and therewith the *profession of arms*. Therefore we find that neither John the Baptist taught soldiers to give up their profession, Luke iii. 14; nor our Lord commanded the Centurion to forsake his calling, Luke vii. 1—10; and Matt. viii. 5—13; nor Peter called upon Cornelius to renounce his occupation as a soldier, Acts x. 26—48. Our Lord indeed rebuked Peter for drawing the sword *against lawful authority*, and said (*in reference to such conduct,*) “all they that take

the sword, shall perish with the sword," Matt. xxvi. 51—54: which is in perfect accordance with Rom. xiii. 2, 5. But when the meaning in this view is so plain, so important, and so entirely suitable to the occasion, I think it shews little reverence for God's word, to affix to it a meaning which sets the New Testament in direct opposition to the Old.

You will perceive that, with regard to all these difficulties, as on the subject of the connection between Church and State, I refer immediately to the Old Testament: considering that therein is to be found a complete body of instructions both in regard to that question, and all the minor questions which arise out of it. And you will perceive that all those difficulties and objections which I have now been considering, are intimately connected therewith. The grand point is, Whether Society can be regulated and a Government conducted upon Christian principles? If so, all the details may be carried on conscientiously by Christian men, and all the needful Offices and Professions may be filled by true Believers,—as evidently was the case in Israel, in its best and most

prosperous days. It is evident, my dear Sister, that your friends, who have suggested these difficulties, go fearful lengths in setting the New Testament in opposition to the Old, and the Gospel against the Law. Their system is a very specious but most dangerous form of Antinomianism: and, under pretence of having found a more excellent way, they would set aside as useless almost the whole of the preceptive parts of Scripture. Their error is one against which our Lord Himself expressly warns us, Matt. v. 17—19. And the Apostle Paul, when setting forth the Gospel in the fullest and clearest manner, says expressly, “ Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law.” (Rom. iii. 31.) And in the same Epistle he distinctly warns us against any disposition to set aside the Old Testament, when he says, “ Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Rom. xv. 4.) The “things written aforetime,”—“the Scriptures” here spoken of, could be no other

than the Scriptures of the Old Testament: from which he himself makes such abundant citations in every part of his writings, and testifies (for this also is said, *in the first instance*, of the Old Testament—the only Scriptures which Timothy could have known *from a child*) that they are “able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” and that they were given “by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.)

Thus far have I proceeded in endeavouring to answer your difficulties, my dear Sister, being obliged to write very hastily, but not (I trust) without help from above. I shall gladly take another opportunity to point out some of the positive excellences of our Church, as they most forcibly strike my own mind; and then you will have, pretty fully, the whole of my views on the subject.

August 30, 1834.

* * * * * *

MY former letters, my dear sister, have been almost exclusively devoted to the refutation of charges and objections which have been brought against the Church of England; but I should do injustice to the subject, and to my own views and feelings respecting it, if I contented myself with such mere exculpation. Let me therefore, as I think I have now answered every objection and difficulty which you have proposed to me, say something in regard to the great and striking excellences of this much calumniated Church.

And in order to put these in the right point of view, I must go back to the first formation of our Church, at the glorious and blessed period of the Reformation; when its foundations were laid by martyrs and confessors. We must ever remember that the Church of

England is one of the *Reformed* or *Protestant* Churches, which came out and separated themselves from the pollutions and abominations, the anti-christian doctrines and idolatries, of the Church of Rome. And with reference to this separation, the first thing which strikes me is, that it is the peculiar glory and blessing of our Church, that the *Reformation of it was effected by those, to whom the work of Reformation more especially and properly belonged*: that is to say, *the Bishops of our Church were the Reformers of it*. This was as it should be. For when the time which God had appointed for this glorious Reformation was come, and the principles upon which it should be conducted began to be disseminated among the nations of Europe, what could real Christians have desired but this;—that those, in whose hands ecclesiastical power and authority was actually lodged at the time, should cheerfully come forward and exercise that power and authority for the Reformation of the Churches which were under their superintendance? Then would all tumults and disorders have

been avoided—all occasion for popular commotions and disturbances cut off—all derangement of the connection, dependence, and relations of established orders and classes in the Church and in society, have been altogether unnecessary. But whenever, and wherever the Heads and Rulers of the Churches refused to discharge their bounden duty in this respect, the work of reformation was so imperiously called for, that the duty devolved next upon the Clergy in general; and if these neglected it, it devolved upon the Laity; for the abominations of the Church of Rome had risen to such a pitch, that they were not to be, on any pretence, submitted to or endured. With every one whose eyes were enlightened to discern the truth of the Gospel, it came simply to this Scriptural principle, “we ought to obey God rather than men;” and therefore we are not to wonder that the Rulers of other Churches who refused to co-operate in this great work, were (in the righteous judgement of God,) entirely swept away. Their opposition to the work, which they ought especially to have taken in hand,

was in every respect to be deeply deplored ; nor was it possible that, when *they*, not only utterly refused to promote it, but to their utmost power opposed it, it should be carried on with such temper and moderation, and with such order and regularity as was to be desired. Therefore in looking upon other Churches, I rejoice that they were by *any means* reformed. The change from Popery to any form which the Reformation took in any of the Protestant Churches, was immensely desirable and important : yea, it behoved all the Protestant Churches cordially to acknowledge one another as Brethren, and to rejoice together unfeignedly in their common deliverance. Nevertheless the Reformation of the Church in all other countries was attended with circumstances which I cannot but deeply regret ; and ended in the establishments of Protestant Churches, which I cannot in all respects approve ; nor could I for my part, *as a minister*, conscientiously belong to any one of them, though I should have quietly submitted and acquiesced *as a layman*, had my lot been cast among them. But it was

the peculiar privilege of the Church of England that the Reformation was undertaken and accomplished by those to whom the work especially appertained. Our Bishops and Archbishops, when called upon to reform the Church, did not shrink from their duty ; but manfully discharged it. They used the power and authority which was in their hands, to the ends and purposes for which God had given it ;—as men entrusted with talents, for which they must account to Him. The honour which belongs to the name of Cranmer, for the conscientious manner in which he gave himself to this work,—still pressing forward from step to step as his light increased—is very great and singular. And the crown of all was that he, with four other Bishops of our Church (Hooper, Ferrar, Latimer, and Ridley) set the seal of Martyrdom to the great work, which they had been so mainly instrumental in accomplishing. And after the period of bloody persecution (which was appointed to try and purify our Church) was overpast, let us still remember that the Archbishops and Bishops were the main instruments, under God, in establishing

the Protestant Church in England, in that form in which it continues to this day.¹

The advantages resulting from this circumstance were many and great. Indeed I do not think there is one thing, connected with the *peculiar* excellences of our Church, which may not be ascribed mainly, to the important circumstance of its having been reformed by those, to whom the ordering and government of the Church belonged ; and therefore in most perfect consistency with that deference, which a Christian will always delight to shew

¹ The providence of God is to be especially acknowledged ; or rather the watchful care and love of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great head of the Church ; in preserving and continuing to us the episcopal succession, in spite of all the fury of the persecution in the days of Queen Mary. If we consider the manner in which even the more mild and moderate of the Popish Bishops refused to consecrate Archbishop Parker, when a warrant was addressed to them for that purpose, we must the more admire that Coverdale and Bale, Barlow and Scory, who had promoted the good work in the days of Edward the Sixth, were yet preserved to continue the succession of their order in the Church of England.

What I have said of England applies equally to Ireland, in which also the Bishops were the main promoters of the Reformation, and concurred with their Brethren in England.

to all constituted authorities. And one especial advantage (as most obviously and naturally hence arising) I will here mention ;—That the principles of humble and loyal submission to constituted Authorities (which, to my mind, are among the fairest ornaments of the Christian character) have been in a peculiar manner interwoven with the principles and constitution of our Church. It is characterized by that due regard to the order and dependence of various ranks and classes, on which the peace and happiness of society so much depend ; and which is so properly and decidedly opposed to the proud independence and levelling spirit of an infidel and rebellious generation.

The next point to which I particularly advert is this ;—That *the Church of England, in separating from the Church of Rome, has been duly careful neither to differ merely for the sake of difference and opposition,—nor (in forsaking that corrupt Church) to forsake also the principles and practices of the pure and primitive Churches.* To renounce her corruptions and idolatries was Scriptural duty ; to renounce any portion of Scriptural Truth which

she yet retained and acknowledged (as the Racovian or Socinian Church in Poland did) would have been awful *heresy*; to renounce things indifferent, for the sake of opposition, and any thing that might well be improved for edification and the purposes of devotion, would have been *schismatical*. For to differ for the sake of difference and opposition, is surely one of the clearest indications of pride, perverseness, and unsubdued self-will—the unchristian dispositions which lie at the root of all *schism*. This, I think, none of the other Reformed Churches duly understood or considered; still less did the Puritans in our own country, who seemed to think, that the mere circumstance of any custom having been used by the Church of Rome was quite a sufficient reason for their unreserved opposition to it! And opposition to ceremonies and things indifferent was carried by many to such an extreme, that it may be fairly questioned whether they did not shew as much superstition in opposing and rejecting, as the Church of Rome itself in maintaining and defending them. The furious opposition still made by some to the use of the organ in

Churches, may serve to illustrate this. And yet it is very important that we should be very careful not to appear even to differ for the sake of differing ; not (in separating from that which is evil) to reject any thing good, profitable, or even indifferent ; in order that we may mark more clearly the true nature and importance of those points, on which Christian Truth and Godliness compel us to differ. Let it be evident to all that we are not yielding to the needless scruples of a diseased conscience ; and our stand against Falsehood and Error will be proportionably more firm, decided, and triumphant ; the line which separates Error from Truth will thus be more distinctly drawn ; and error will thereby be branded with the marks of darker and deeper condemnation. Therefore the Church of England, in separating from the mystic Babylon, was not only careful to retain the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and the fullest acknowledgement of the great and fundamental Truths which they contain (as did indeed *all* the other Reformed Churches) ; but also the Episcopal Ordination and Government, which had been

transmitted from the primitive Churches, through the Church of Rome,—and which I am satisfied is truly Scriptural and Apostolic—(for I go whole lengths with Bishop Hall, in his book on the Divine Right of Episcopacy)—and the use of a Liturgy, which was evidently derived from the primitive Churches too. This, when duly purged from Popish Idolatries, and translated into the vernacular tongue, was indeed admirably suited for the purpose of public devotion. Such festivals and holidays also, as had been handed down from the primitive Church, and could be made subservient to edification, and the setting forth of grand and important Truths, were also gladly retained :¹ not because the observance

¹ In retaining many of these holidays, we do not stand alone. The Lutheran Church retains a large portion of them. Even the Dutch Churches (excepting those of Zeeland) which are strictly Calvinistic both in Doctrine and Discipline, observe two days at Christmas, two at Easter, and two at Whitsuntide. They also observe the festival of the Circumcision, Good-Friday, and Ascension-Day ; and also the season of Lent, during which they preach constantly upon the History of the Passion,—beginning on the *seventh* Sunday before Easter. The accounts contained in the four Evangelists are harmonized, and then the whole is divided into as many texts as there are

of such days is *essential*—but because it *may* be improved for most important instruction, and thus conduce to edification, and is therefore *desirable* and *important*. What then but the spirit of needless innovation would set them aside? It was sufficient to discard all those festivals and holidays which were superstitious and questionable, and surely the line was most judiciously drawn, when we commemorate with honour only those saints whom the Scriptures mention with honour,—the Virgin Mary, (Luke i. 48, 49,) the Apostles, and the first Martyr of the Christian Church: to which holidays are added, one day for the especial celebration of the Communion of Saints, and one for that of the Ministration of Angels;—important points of Christian truth assuredly; and worthy, one would think, of at least an annual contemplation.

Now in all these things our Church has not only been careful to retain *all* that was of

services during those seven weeks: and the Minister has no choice; he is obliged to preach on the text which comes in order. It is observable that the Churches are never so well attended as during that season.

Apostolic origin in the Church of Rome, and all the relics of pure antiquity, which could testify our desire to maintain (as far as possible,) the bonds of union and communion with the primitive Church; but in the manner of her separation, and in so carefully retaining everything that could be made subservient to spiritual edification, has abundantly testified that it was *not* in the spirit of schism and perverse opposition, nor in the affectation of needless singularity; but simply from love to the truth as it is in Jesus, from zeal for the honour and truth of God, and from reverential submission to the Supreme Authority of His blessed word, that she came out and separated herself from a corrupt, idolatrous, unscriptural, and Anti-christian Church.

And this leads me to observe, in the third place, that, truly calm and temperate as the Church of England has been in regard to exterior forms, Government, and Discipline; *she has been firm, decided, and uncompromising in her separation from the Church of Rome, in all that regards Evangelical Doctrine.* No one of the Reformed Churches is more clear,

in stating the pure Truth of the Gospel in opposition to the soul-destroying Errors of Popery ; no one of them has publicly and authoritatively entered a more distinct and decided protest against its superstitions, idolatries, and manifold abominations, than the Church of England has done in her Articles and Homilies. So that, on points of inferior importance, she has exhibited all the calmness and moderation of truly Christian wisdom ; that all her energy and burning zeal might be concentrated upon those points which are of supreme importance. And is not this as it should be ? Does not all this tend to give to Christian and Protestant Doctrine its due place and importance ? Does it not tend to make our protest and opposition more solemn and impressive,—that it is so evidently the opposition and protest of calm deliberation and sober wisdom ? We have given no advantage to the enemy, by attacking her upon points which were defensible ; or even upon those where a victory was unimportant, and a conflict but a waste of strength : but we concentrate all our strength, to maintain the

conflict, upon those points which are vital and essential, with a tenfold vigour. Nor can any consistent member of the Church of England be diverted from those main and fundamental points, to wage an interminable and useless conflict with the Papists about mere externals. We take our stand upon the grand essentials of evangelical Truth; upon that ground which is the sure foundation of the sinner's hope and the believer's comfort: and, maintaining ourselves the Citadel of Truth, we attack the Man of sin in the heart of his empire at once, without wasting time upon the frontiers.

And I would further observe, that as we are most strenuous in maintaining Christian Doctrine, so also we are full and ample in our Confession of it: we are clear and distinct upon all points. The best and purest Churches of the Continent clearly saw and confessed this. And while, on account of the error of Consubstantiation (so closely allied to Transubstantiation) which it maintained, and of its total silence on the Doctrines of Predestination and Election, (which soon made way for grievous errors on those points) they counted

the Lutheran Church as only half-reformed ; they fully recognized the Church of England, as standing altogether upon the same broad platform of Evangelical Doctrine with themselves : and gladly invited, and cordially received, her assistance, in sifting and condemning the semi-Popish and semi-Socinian errors of Arminius and his partizans : and very great and important was the weight and influence of the British Divines in the Synod of Dordrecht,¹ —insomuch, that they may be well considered

¹ Ever since the first fearful inroads of Arminianism into the Church of England, it has been the fashion to abuse this solemn Assembly without measure : and, even in works from which one might have expected better things, we find unmeasured censure poured upon the Synod of Dordrecht. I was both surprised and grieved to find this done in the Life of Bishop Davenant, prefixed to the translation of his Exposition of Colossians, by the Rev. Josiah Allport ! In a Series of Letters on the state of Religion in Holland, in the Christian Review, Nos. viii. ix. x. xiii. xiv. and xv. I have endeavoured, by a reference to Historical Facts and Documents too little known in this Country, to vindicate the Characters and Conduct of the faithful Pastors of the Dutch Church, the Contra-Remonstrants ;—among whom I am persuaded that all the real godliness in the Country was to be found,—while among the Arminians, or Remonstrants, I cannot find any trace of it. The Contra-Re-

as having given the tone and character to the Articles of that celebrated assembly. And it was very important to the cause of Scriptural Truth that they did so: for the same Christian wisdom and holy sobriety, which characterizes our Church in its separation from the Church of Rome with regard to externals, is also eminently conspicuous in her statement of those deep and difficult points of Christian

montrants, as a body, present a most delightful example of the union of sound Doctrine and real Piety, with devoted Loyalty to their Prince, and zeal for the best interests of their Country. The Arminians on the contrary were, from the first, entangled in a most suspicious and dangerous alliance with Socinians, were deeply tainted with Socinian principles themselves (in the most specious indeed, but most subtle and dangerous form)—they were persecutors and oppressors when they had power and authority in their hands, and seditious conspirators and rebels when they had not: For the proof of these assertions, I refer to the first four of the Letters above mentioned. *Here* I would rather observe, that those who revile the Synod of Dordrecht, are little solicitous for the glory of our Church—they pour contempt upon one of the brightest parts of her history: for perhaps, never did the Church of England take a more imposing station, or act a more important part among the Churches of Europe, than in the discussions of that Synod; and this, not by assuming any authority, but by the weight and influence of that true

Doctrine. Indeed it is apparent throughout the whole of our Articles: and never shall I forget the impression made upon my mind when I first read them; which was (as you know) at a very important and interesting period, when I was groping my way out of horrible depths indeed. The calmness and sobriety of the statements so entirely commended itself to my judgement, as what ought to be in such a summary of doctrine, that I stood amazed while I read: for, I need not piety, sound learning, and Christian wisdom which characterized her deputies: by means of which they influenced the whole Synod, and led them into that calm and Scriptural statement, in exact conformity with our own seventeenth Article, which we find in the Decrees or Articles of the Synod. Any one who will carefully compare those Articles with the seventeenth Article of our Church, and with the Lambeth Articles—(which would most probably have been the standard of those of Dordrecht,—but for the influence of our English Divines) will understand what I mean by a calm and Scriptural Statement. The English Deputies were George Carleton, Bp. of Llandaff, Joseph Hall, (afterwards Bp. of Norwich,) John Davenant, afterwards Bp. of Salisbury, Samuel Ward, Master of Sidney College, Cambridge, Thomas Goad, Precentor of St. Paul's, and Walter Balcanqual, a Divine of the Scotch Episcopal Church. The praises of some of these are yet in all the Churches.

tell you, that all the prejudices of education and association had prepared me to expect anything but calm and sober wisdom in them.

But not only am I deeply convinced, that, in her separation from the Church of Rome, our Church has shewn pre-eminently above all other Churches, the calmness and sobriety of truly Christian wisdom ; but also, in her own constitution and principles, I do most cordially, and with full conviction, give her the decided preference above them. It is, in my view, no light matter, that in many particulars, she is conformed to the example of the primitive Church, and maintains the principles of unity and communion with *her*, in the period of her first love and apostolic purity. While maintaining our Christian Liberty, and fully granting that, ' It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly alike ; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word ; ' (Article 34) we yet have shewn due reverence and regard

to the models of Antiquity ; we have shewn ourselves desirous, not to devise any thing new, but to return, as far as possible, to the Good Old Way. We have retained the Episcopal Government, Succession, and Ordination of the primitive Church. We have retained, with comparatively slight variations, her Liturgy, Festivals, and Fasts. And thus we have testified that with the Catholic and Apostolic Church,—before its simplicity and beauty were deformed, and its purity was polluted, by the Corruptions of Popery,—we desire *to be one* in heart and mind, in doctrine and practice. The Church of Rome had awfully departed from the primitive Church : we have been careful, as far as possible, to return to it. So that our Church is not a *new* Church, but a *reformed* Church : —a Church *restored* from the rubbish of unseemly additions and human corruptions, with which it had been encumbered and defaced, and which threatened utterly to destroy it ; and shining forth, at once in the splendor of renovation, and in the venerable dignity of antiquity.

For my own part, I must say that veneration for antiquity, and a desire to maintain a communion of spirit with the primitive Church, would lead me, as it did our pious and excellent Reformers, to go as far as possible in adopting everything that had the seal and sanction of ancient usage. Nevertheless I do not forget, that antiquity, and agreement with other Churches in distant nations or ages past, are but *secondary* points, by which to try the excellence of a Church. The *first* regard must be given to Scriptural truth and spiritual edification: and with reference to these *primarily*, must every thing in the constitution and practice of a Church be judged. If Scripture were plainly and decidedly against it, I should be no advocate for Episcopacy. But till it be proved that it is so, I must say, that veneration for those eminent men who (as I have already pointed out,) were indeed the Reformers of our Church, would never permit me to unite in any attempt to set aside the order to which they belonged, or to deprive it of any portion of its privileges. But I am fully persuaded, not only that there is no Scripture

against Episcopacy, but that Scripture is decidedly for it. There is a very clear and concise proof of this in a tract by the late Mr. Hey of Leeds, wherein he confines himself to the argument from Scripture, which he states very distinctly and satisfactorily. Bishop Hall on the Divine right of Episcopacy, is a larger work on the subject, and goes at large into the proof, both from Scripture and Antiquity. To my mind, these works are perfectly satisfactory. And I see besides, in the very constitution of all Societies, that an acknowledged head is not only desirable, but indispensable. And as in all civil governments there must needs be a king, whether he bear the name and wear the crown or no ; so in ecclesiastical governments, there must needs be some one who really and truly exercises the authority of a bishop. Look at the most decidedly democratical states; and it is evident that, in the times of their highest prosperity and glory, there has always been some Themistocles or Pericles, who, from weight of personal character and talent, exercised all, or more than all, the authority of a king. And when there was no man of that stamp to

"wield at will that fierce democracy," a Nicias, who had scarcely any thing to recommend him but his wealth, or even such a mere bawling demagogue as Cleon, must rule with kingly power, or play the despot and the tyrant, among those who yet fancied themselves free! And in times of peril, Rome had no resource but to set up an absolute despot, under the name of Dictator! So clear is it that government cannot be carried on without a king! And looking at the history of those Churches which have rejected the name and form of Episcopacy, it has struck me forcibly that they never really prospered, except when there were some individuals among them, who, from weight of character, and the influence of talents, learning, or piety, exercised all the power and authority of Bishops. This was manifestly the case with Calvin himself, who in the Church of Geneva had certainly more influence and authority, than any Bishop or Archbishop ever exercised in England, since the time of the Reformation. Now, when such influence and authority in the nature of things is necessary, it seems to me far better, and more consistent with Chris-

tian uprightness, that this should be formally acknowledged; and that such persons should be recognized by the constitution of the Church; than that individuals should exercise the power or submit to it, in contradiction to their professed principles; which evidently carries much of inconsistency, if not something of hypocrisy with it.

With regard to a Liturgy, the *principle* is plainly recognized in Scripture; which has furnished us with a multitude of forms, both of prayer and praise. Nor do I myself see how anything that deserves the name of public worship can be carried on without it. For it is not really a public worshiping of God, unless all the praying persons present can, with one heart and mind, unite in the petitions and praises which are offered. Now, when we consider the diversities of men's minds and feelings, how few persons, in a large congregation, can be imagined capable of following a prayer of any length (and embracing the necessary variety of topics) if this prayer be really extemporeaneous. Some may follow, to admire the composition, the fluency, the feeling, &c.;

—some may follow, so far as to understand what is spoken ; some perhaps, may enter into the spirit of a considerable portion of it. But that even the spiritual part of a large congregation should, *intelligently* and *devotionally*, enter into the whole of it, so as to make it their own, and to offer it up from the bottom of their hearts to Him, who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and in truth,—can this with sober reason be expected ? And what is the fact ? How often do we find a spirit of devotion *appearing* to pervade a Congregation in which no Liturgy is used ? The want of any such appearance is universally lamented, by those who, being accustomed to the Public Devotions of our Church, have had opportunities of observing the state of Congregations less favoured, during the portion of time allotted to prayer. Then how commonly is that portion of time cut very short ! so that in a service of two hours, perhaps not half an hour is devoted to prayer. (I speak of what I have myself observed ; and in that half hour, or very little more, time was found for singing *three times* as well,) and how evidently

is this portion of the services of the Sanctuary *undervalued*, as well as cut short, in those Churches ; though it is written, “ My house shall be called *a House of Prayer* :”—evidently pointing out, that *this* is the special purpose for which we meet in the public assemblies of God’s people. We gladly take the opportunity for the preaching of God’s word,—and very important it is that we should do so ;—but the special purpose for which we meet *is prayer* ; and meeting *for prayer*, we expect our Saviour’s presence and blessing, according to his own precious promises, Matt. xviii. 19, 20 ; and Exodus xx. 24. (latter part.) And when we do indeed unite in Prayer beforehand, may we not reasonably and Scripturally expect a much more abundant blessing on *the word preached* ?

My own deep conviction and impression then, is,—that those Churches which have discarded the use of a Liturgy, have made no sufficient provision for *the Public Worship of God*. But, the more deeply we consider, the more reason shall we find to admire and rejoice in the abundant provision which the

Church of England has made, by the adoption partly, and partly the compilation, of a truly Scriptural Liturgy ; which every one has an opportunity of deeply studying and thoroughly digesting, so as to make it entirely his own. Hence it comes to pass, that a devout worshipper in our Church has every help provided—and has only one thing to attend to, and that is, the most inward and spiritual part of Divine Worship. He has not to seek for words ; for a form of sound words is already put into his hands, and into his mouth. He has not to exert himself either to understand or to follow the words which are newly uttered in his hearing, perhaps with many difficulties and questionings as to how far he can cordially receive them and make them his own (which I am afraid in other churches too often engenders a disposition rather to criticise the prayer than to join in it¹) ; for the words, and their

¹ For strange indeed it would be, and contrary to all experience of human nature, if those who are taught to cavil and object against our beautiful and admirable Liturgy, should not very commonly indulge the same spirit in descanting upon and censuring the effusions of a minister, whom they are too apt (even while they attend upon his ministrations) to con-

full force and meaning, are familiar to him; and if there should be found any difficulties, he has abundant opportunities of seeking and obtaining information and explanation. He has only to watch over his heart, and to see that *that* be right with God, that so he may worship Him in spirit and in truth. From this one grand point he has nothing to distract his attention. To this one thing all his powers and faculties, his whole soul, may and should be given.

But there is yet another point to be considered in reference to the provision thus made for *Public Worship* by our Church, which I cannot better express than in the words of an American writer, Bishop Dehon, which I find in the second number of the *Western Watchman*.¹

sider accountable to them for what he preaches and for what he prays! And how often must it happen that even the humble and sincere worshipper is harassed and distressed, as to how far he can say, Amen, to the former portion of the prayer, when he ought to be attending to the latter. And if the connection is once broken, how is he to recover it?

¹ A little periodical, published monthly at Plymouth, price two-pence, in which the Church of England is ably defended.

‘ To excite you to join diligently and with reverence in the service of the Common Prayer, I need only guide your attention to the sublime extent of the application of its social character. It is not only in this house in which you assemble, that in all its parts it is *socially* performed ; the *same* prayers and praises, in the *same* words, are offered perhaps at the *same* time, with the *same* faith, by ten thousand tongues, to the *same* God and Father of all. From all parts of the globe the Amen resounds, which you here utter ; and the Doxology is raised, in which you are here called to bear a part. It is not in this age only, in which you live, that this Service conveys the devotions of Christians to heaven ; in some of its ejaculations, the first disciples breathed their praises and their wishes to the Most High. Its collects have, many of them, for many hundred years, been the vehicle of the public devotions of the Church, and upon some of its apostrophes has the last breath of distinguished martyrs trembled, whose piety during their lives was refreshed with its hymns and its psalms.

‘ It is not under the Gospel dispensation alone that some parts of this service have been used to express the common devotions of the faithful; there are hymns in it which were sung by the Saints, under the Mosaic dispensation; and in the use of the Psalms particularly, the Church of the New Testament is found in society with the Church of the Old; for in these sacred compositions not the emotions of David’s heart only were vented, but much of the worship of God’s ancient people did consist. It is not in the Church militant upon earth only, that this service in some of its parts is used; we have borrowed from the Church *triumphant* in heaven, their gratulatory anthems and their perpetual hymns, and have reason to believe that their voices are in concert with ours, when we sing the song of the Redeemed.

‘ How sublime is this view of the communion and fellowship of the Church, under the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, in different ages and in distant nations, on earth and in heaven, in the use of some part or other of that holy Liturgy, which it is our distinguished

felicity to have received from our fathers. Who would not wish in the temple to bear on his lips the Psalms and Prayers, in which the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble army of Martyrs, have uttered their devotions to God? How dead must he be to the finest associations which can affect the mind, who is not animated to a devout and fervent performance of his part of the service of the Sanctuary; by the consideration, that upon this same censer which the Church holds out to him, incense hath been put by those hands, which are now extended before the throne of the Almighty, and that as its smoke ascended, those eyes were lifted up to heaven, which are now fixed on the visible glory of God and of the Lamb.'

Considerations of the same kind have often occurred to my own mind, and greatly refreshed and animated me in my devotions: but I could not have expressed them so beautifully.

But then many exceptions have been taken against our Liturgy. Some object to forms of prayer altogether. Others carp and cavil

at various expressions which are found in that of the Church of England. It is a very easy thing to cavil and object. No one is too ignorant, or too foolish to do this. But, to my mind, those cavils and objections seem to arise principally out of the peculiar excellences of our Liturgy.

The objection urged by very many against a Form of Prayer is to the last degree absurd. For let the effusion of the minister of a Dissenting chapel be (as respects himself) as entirely extemporaneous as can be desired or conceived ; what is it, to every individual besides, but a *Form of Prayer* ? that is to say, something composed for him by another, which he must adopt and make his own, *if he can !* And if I am to worship God by the help of a Form (as in *all* public worship I necessarily must) which is best ? that I should have a new Form every time, which it is next to impossible that I should *fully* understand, follow, or enter into ? or a printed Form, which I can study, till I fully understand it and enter into every part of it ? The latter appears to me beyond all comparison preferable. Nor can I under-

stand how any one, upon calm consideration, can hesitate about it.

Yet we should do injustice to our admirable Liturgy if we considered its value only in reference to the *Public Worship* of God. I have found it of the greatest use in *private* devotion. And very often when my mind has been so harassed and distracted, that I was utterly unable to put together three sentences of my own, I have had recourse to a few of the Collects, or to the general Confession, or to the Litany; and endeavouring to make these my own, and to enter into their full force and meaning, I have gradually found my heart and mind more and more engaged, till at length I have been enabled to enjoy a very delightful and profitable season of real communion with God. And when I did not so much need the very words, I have found that different parts of our Liturgy supplied most excellent directories; and in following the general train of thought, and enlarging now and then, as my own case and circumstances required, I have been most delightfully assisted in *private* as well as *public* devotion.

And the main objections urged against *our* Liturgy in particular, seem to me to arise, not from any defects in it, but (as I have already said) from its excellences. It is throughout a Form of Prayer for believers—for the children of God. Is it possible to draw up a *Christian* Form of Prayer, for those who are *not* believers? for faith is essential to prayer, (James i. 6, 7. Mark xi. 24;) and no one but a believer *can* worship God spiritually. (Heb. xi. 6.) Therefore to say, it takes for granted that all who join in it are real Christians, is just the same thing as to say, that it takes for granted what is implied in the very notion of Christian worship, and *no more*. Whether *the individual* really and truly joins in it, is a matter for private and earnest self-examination. But how *Christian* worship is to be conducted at all (either *with* a printed Form or *without* one) so as not to imply that all who join in the worship are *real Christians*, is a problem which I am sure no wit of man will ever be able to solve.¹ Do these objectors wish us to

¹ The following anecdote, related in the life of the Rev. Legh Richmond, may serve to throw some light upon this

have Forms of Prayer, which shall imply that those who use them are *not* Christians? or such as shall leave the matter always *doubtful*? Forms that are just as suitable to unbelievers as to believers! What sort of worship should we have then? Not *Christian* worship it is evident.

And this principle must run through every thing. It applies to all the occasional Services, as much as the daily prayers.. We must either have *unchristian* forms, or such as *imply* that those who use them are real Christians.

subject; and to show that, *in practice*, the strictest Dissenters cannot do otherwise than forget their own principles.

"Mr. Richmond once met the late Rev. Andrew Fuller, the well-known Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, at the house of Mr. Livius, in Bedford. The conversation turned on the ritual of the Church of England. Mr. Fuller remarked, 'that it *assumed* the sincerity of the worshipper, which he considered a defect.' 'How would *you* frame those services?' said Mr. Richmond. 'The Church presumes, in the judgement of charity, that all her worshippers are sincere, and forms her Ritual on this principle. If they are not sincere, the greater is their responsibility.' 'But the fact,' said Mr. F. 'is otherwise; and charity, unsupported by fact, is misplaced.' 'How would *you* remedy the defect?' rejoined

But our Formularies are not merely, in a low and vague sense, *Christian Formularies*: in them is set forth a *very pure, high, and Scriptural standard* of Christian faith and devotion: not a standard adapted to the low and miserable attainments of too many. And is not this too *as it should be?* Here is a

Mr. Richmond. Here the conversation was interrupted. The time being arrived for family worship, Mr. Richmond expounded a passage of Scripture, and Mr. Fuller concluded with prayer; after which our friend observed, with a smile, 'your prayer, Sir, is liable to the same objection which you made to the services of our Church. Your petitions for pardon and grace, your acknowledgement of guilt, your hope and confidence in God, were all generally offered up without qualification, as expressive of the feelings and sentiments of the whole assembly.' 'How would you have me pray?' said Mr. F. 'Precisely as you did,' replied Mr. Richmond; 'but you must no longer adhere to your objection; for you were not warranted to believe, except in the judgement of charity, that all the members of the family were sincere worshippers. You have this night authorized the principle on which our services were constructed, by your own example.'

And doubtless every one in attempting to lead the devotions of a family or a congregation, except under very peculiar circumstances, would do the same. In short, if he were humbly, earnestly, and fervently praying himself, how could it be otherwise? In this matter Christian feeling would lead him right, however his judgement might err.

standard provided that continually calls us and assists us to press forward to high attainments—"to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ :"—not a standard, which, on the one hand, would beguile us to rest in low attainments ; and, on the other, prove a real hindrance to our rising higher. And who would, on full deliberation, wish it otherwise ? O then, how unwise,—yea, and what ill friends to the souls of men, are they, who would pull down the Liturgy of the Church to the low and miserable standard of their own attainments ; instead of endeavouring themselves, and urging and helping others, to press forward to the high and holy standard of faith and devotion, which our Church has, with so much wisdom and love, set before us !

On this principle I should answer all the objections which have been brought against the Baptismal Service.¹ Another class of objections arises from some persons overlooking, and others neglecting, the real principles of the Church as to discipline.

¹ See the paper annexed to this Letter ; in which the principal objections to this Service are considered.

On this point I have spoken before. There are two extremes to be shunned. The utter neglect of all discipline on the one hand ; and an attempt to enforce it too strictly on the other. So much as is expressly prescribed in the Rubrics certainly ought to be enforced ; not in a harsh and overbearing manner, but with kindness, calm judgement, and due firmness. If this were done, all objections taken against the Burial Service,¹ and the Commu-

¹ For the Rubric at the commencement expressly says : 'Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for *any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.*' And if it be seriously considered, what persons according to the Rubrics and the Canons ought to be excommunicated, and presented to the Bishop as such,—and how many, for various offences, are declared by the Canons to be *ipso facto* excommunicate ; it will appear evidently to be a thing impossible that any Minister should be called upon to use the Burial Service over any one, respecting whom, in a judgement of charity, he would not be called upon to say 'our hope is' that 'this our brother' doth rest in Christ. Surely we may fitly express *an humble hope* concerning all those whom conscientiously, according to the plain principles of our Church, we could admit to the communion ?

It may be fairly questioned whether all those who regularly and wilfully absent themselves from the communion altogether,

nion as administered in our Church, would vanish.

But while I am most fully satisfied with the Articles and Liturgy¹ of the Church of England as *ipso facto* excommunicate!—otherwise why are they to be presented to the Bishop, according to Canon 112?

The expression ‘in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection,’ which is sometimes cavilled at, expresses nothing as to the individual, but solely refers to the Resurrection as a point of faith. It stood originally ‘his Resurrection:’ but was altered at the last revision of the Prayer Book, on account of the scruples of some.

¹ I have not here mentioned the Homilies, because we do not *subscribe* the Homilies in the same exact and solemn manner that we do the Articles and the Liturgy: that is to say, we do not subscribe so much to every *expression* in them, as to the *general scope and doctrine* of them, (Art. xxxv.) But most cordially, and from the bottom of my heart, do I thank God for them, as containing indeed ‘a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times.’ Nor is there, I believe, a single Minister in the Church, the strain of whose preaching might not be greatly improved by a more diligent study and frequent citation of the Homilies. Here also our Church has set before us a high standard, both as to purity of doctrine and vigour of expression,—and also as to faithful dealing with the consciences of men. Therefore, though I do not feel myself warranted to insist upon every single expression, as in the case of the Articles and Liturgy,—I do with my whole heart include them in the same commendation.

England, and do not wish one expression in either to be altered, but would steadfastly resist every attempt and every proposal of the kind; yet I must confess, that among the clergy of *all classes*, I see and lament great deficiencies as to the practical following out of the principles of the Church. There is need that much more instruction, especially such as is catechetical and familiar, should be given, that our preaching should be more full and clear, more plain and searching, more fully in accordance with 2 Tim. iv. 1—5,—in order that the full improvement should be made of the standard which our excellent Reformers have left us. In short, in all respects we need to be much more careful and diligent than we are, in endeavouring to rise up, and press forward, to the standard proposed to us, in doctrine, in practice, and in devotion, in the fulness of the instruction which we give to our people, and in the example which we set before them, that we may both teach and shew them, what manner of persons they ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, who belong to such a Church, who recognise such pure and

Apostolic doctrines, who take upon our lips such spiritual and truly Christian prayers and praises. The Lord God, of His infinite mercy, pardon the short-comings and deficiencies of all the ministers and members of so pure a Church, and especially my own, for Jesus Christ's sake ! Amen. ^

But while speaking of the manner in which the Church of England has provided for the public worship of God, let me not entirely pass over one circumstance, which is her peculiar glory, above all the rest, in this matter. This is *the honour she puts upon God's own word*,—not only in the multitude of scriptural expressions which are introduced in the more immediately devotional parts of her public services ; but particularly in bringing the Scriptures before her people in such large masses as she has done, leaving nothing to the indolence of unfaithful ministers herein, but insisting that, in the morning and evening services of every Sabbath, there should be (on an average) seven or eight chapters of God's own word, 'distinctly and audibly,' read to the people, in the lessons from the Old and New

Testaments, in the Psalms for the day, and in the Epistles and Gospels. When I have been present in the services of the sanctuary in other places of worship, both at home and abroad, much and deeply as I have felt and lamented the want of many things which our Church has so wisely and beautifully provided, in nothing have I so deeply and painfully felt the comparative meagreness and barrenness of those services, as in the want of the reading of anything like a due portion of God's word. You, my dear sister, have so wonderfully experienced the benefit of that abundant scriptural instruction which our Church has provided and insists upon, that you will be fully prepared to understand what I have felt, when I found the reading of the Scriptures committed to the clerk or precentor, who, while the people were bustling in and finding their seats, read just one single chapter, or only a part of one, breaking off abruptly when the clock struck, and announced that the minister was getting up into the pulpit; and after that, not one verse read from the word of God, except the text of an hour and half sermon. And who

can tell how important it has proved, to preserve our Church from those depths of Socinianism, into which so many other less favoured Churches have fallen,¹ that, while the doctrine

¹ It is observable that the great body of the ministers and people in all the Reformed Churches, one after the other, have fearfully fallen away from the doctrines of the Reformation, our own among the number. Yet, even in the time of the deepest downfall in our Church, the great majority still maintained the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and some able champions of those grand fundamental articles of our faith were raised up among us. Other important doctrines, especially that of the Atonement, were rather *neglected* in their practical use and application, than actually *denied* : and there is reason to believe that many humble and unknown individuals were savingly instructed, and led in the ways of godliness by means of our truly Evangelical Liturgy, even while the least of evangelical truth was proclaimed from our pulpits. And in that Liturgy our Church seemed to carry the seeds of a revival. The Churches on the Continent have fallen away into far deeper and more awful depths, into Socinianism, Neology, and utter Infidelity ; into the most determined and awful opposition to *every part of revealed truth* : and for the hopeful appearances of a revival, which here and there appear, seem to be in great measure indebted to an influence *from without*, and to an impulse communicated (at least in some measure) from this favoured land. And the want of that help, which is so abundantly supplied to a faithful Minister by our excellent Liturgy, is very observable,—even in those parts, in

of the Trinity has been so prominently held forth in our truly Scriptural Liturgy, it has been so abundantly confirmed by the copious reading of the Scriptures. Here has been God's own testimony continually to His own truth: and, beyond all doubt and question, His blessing upon the Church which has been

which the most cheering symptoms of a revival have been manifested.

There is but too much reason to believe that the Dissenting Congregations in our own country were at one time falling away very rapidly into the same awful gulph, which has overwhelmed so generally the Churches of Germany and Switzerland. Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism were increasing on every side. But the revival, which commenced in the Establishment, in a measure communicated itself to them. Yet even now it is little known to what a vast extent Sabellianism, and some of the subtler forms of Arianism and Socinianism prevail among Dissenting Ministers and Congregations—even those which are too commonly and too easily taken for granted to be Orthodox and Evangelical. Some fearful facts have come within the compass of my own knowledge, and such as must lead every considerate mind to enquire very seriously, What can we suppose would have been the state of the Dissenters generally in this country, if it had not been for that Establishment, with its Articles and Liturgy, which they so greatly revile, and continually object to? I believe that this land, in which the means of grace and the

so careful to honour and to publish His holy word.

This letter, my dear Sister, has already exceeded all bounds; yet I cannot conclude it without reference to one part of our Liturgy which, I fear is comparatively little known—though it ought to be known and studied by

opportunities of Christian instruction are now so abundant, and which is sending forth the means of Evangelical instruction into all the world, would have been before this in the same awful state as Germany a few years back.

In different Churches the tendency to decay and departure from the truth has been more or less checked and limited by various circumstances. It might be very interesting and instructive to enquire into those circumstances, with reference to those Churches which have longest continued in their purity, and least departed from the faith. With respect to our own country, I have no doubt whatever that our Articles and Liturgy have been the great bulwark against Arianism, Socinianism, and Neology; and that they have mainly contributed to hold up the Standard of Doctrine among the Dissenters, as well as within the pale of the Church.

An intelligent Christian, who had spent some years in America, informed me that the Episcopal Church in that country, with its Articles and Liturgy, (taken, with very slight alterations, from our own,) was generally considered by all well informed Christians, as the great bulwark against Socinianism.

every one. I allude to the Ordination Services: which now, most properly, are introduced by the Prayer-Book and Homily Society into all their Prayer-Books,—except the very smallest. More especially I would refer you to a portion of that for the Ordination of Priests, beginning with the Collect, ‘Almighty God, giver of all good things,’ &c. and ending with the commission given, ‘Take thou authority to preach the word of God,’ &c. or, I might have said, going on to the end of the Service. Those who have not read and studied the whole of those Services, have yet much to learn as to what our Church really is, and what her Ministers ought to be. May the God of all mercy raise and stir up many of them to press forward to the standard there proposed to us, make us indeed faithful to our Ordination vows and engagements, as there set forth, and hear and answer the prayers we are there taught to offer!—then shall our Church be enabled to defy and triumph over all her enemies, to the praise and glory of His holy Name, through Christ the Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen. * * *

In connection with one of the subjects briefly touched upon in the preceding letter (our Office for Baptism) I here insert a paper referring to that part of our Liturgy, which has been, among other things, greatly objected to by the adversaries of the Church of England. The first rough sketch of this paper was drawn up in answer to some questions proposed to a friend, who requested me to answer them for him. A copy, both of the questions and the answers, was afterwards given to the Christian sister to whom these letters were addressed:—so that it formed, in fact, a part of the correspondence:—which will be a sufficient warrant for the insertion here of a more intelligible transcript.

QUESTION I.—How far are we authorized from Scripture to take upon us to promise for others?

Before I proceed to a direct answer to this question, it may be well to premise two or three observations.

1. The three things which are vowed and

promised by the Sponsors on behalf of the child, in baptism, are no more than the bounden duty of the child,—whether promised for him or no. So that no *new* duties are hereby imposed upon the child. It is the duty of the child to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, to believe all the Articles of the Christian faith, and to obey God's holy will and Commandments ; and this must be done on pain of everlasting condemnation, by every one that lives under the sound of the gospel. This is what none but infidels can deny : and before *they* presume to deny it, it behoves them not only to *say*, but to *prove*, that the Bible is a forgery. And it must be remembered that a vow or promise to do that which is already our duty, is a very different thing from a vow or promise to do that, which would not otherwise be a duty at all. Such a vow or promise is first, a solemn recognition of that which is already our duty ; and next, an engagement to discharge it,—a declaration of our will and purpose so to do. Is it not right that in the administration of Baptism there should be such solemn and public recognition of those duties,

on behalf of the child to whom the ordinance is administered ?

2. *The whole of this solemn transaction is for the real benefit and true welfare of the child.* It is by this ordinance received into the visible Church, made partaker of all the privileges which belong to the visible Church, put under the protection of Christ, and solemnly committed to His care. Still greater benefits, even such as are spiritual and eternal, are freely offered by Christ in that ordinance : but these are inseparably connected with the discharge of those duties. If therefore we consider the blessings connected with the discharge, and the awful penalty annexed to the neglect of those duties, a solemn engagement to discharge them will appear the most reasonable thing in the world. Therefore nothing is promised on behalf of the child, which is not itself perfectly right and reasonable : insomuch that no one in the exercise of sober reason could refuse to make the promises, or to enter into the engagement. We may therefore reasonably conclude, that the whole matter being laid before the child, if able to answer

for himself,—he would make the same promise which his Sponsors make for him. A readiness to make the promise is not the difficulty that we are warranted to expect in the child of Christian parents, Christianly brought up. And to provide that he shall be Christianly brought up, is the main reason for the appointment of Sponsors ; as appears from the exhortation addressed to them in the conclusion of the Service.

3. But the difficulty that may be expected to arise, and which naturally does arise in every serious mind, regards the ability to discharge the duties promised. ‘ How shall I promise for another what I find by experience I cannot perform myself ? ’ is the very objection which we hear advanced : and it is the real difficulty which demands a satisfactory answer. But when a Christian makes this objection, and feels this difficulty, let him consider *upon what principle he can make such a promise for himself*. He renews his own baptismal vows and engagements every time he comes to the Lord’s Table, to say nothing here of the solemn manner in which he takes them upon himself

in Confirmation. In what strength or dependence does he venture to do this? *In himself* he has no more strength or disposition to keep those promises than the infant who is presented at the font. (See the Collects¹ for the Second Sunday in Lent, the Fourth after Epiphany, the Fourth after Easter, the First after Trinity, &c.) However deeply convinced he may be of the propriety and necessity of entering into such engagements, and of renewing from time to time his covenant with God, what shall warrant him to hope that either *his will and purpose* to keep them will be steadfast and abiding, or that he will have any *strength or power* to fulfil them? The only answer must be, that he makes and renews those promises *in faith*, in reliance upon that God, “ who worketh in us both to will and to do, of His

¹ These Collects are referred to as showing the language which our Church puts into the mouths of all her members, in regard to the weakness and helplessness of man; and because it is desirable to see the perfect consistency of what is now stated, in reference to the Baptismal Service, with other parts of her Liturgy. This doctrine is distinctly stated in the tenth Article, and it is not necessary here to enter into the Scriptural proofs of it.

good pleasure," (Phil. ii. 13.) and that Saviour without whom "we can do nothing." (John xx. 5.) If the vow and promise be not made in faith, it is rash and presumptuous; and we may be perfectly sure that it will be, continually and in every respect, awfully violated. Now on the very same principle that he can promise for himself, he can promise for his godchild: that is to say, *in faith*, in reliance upon that gracious God, to whose worship and service, love and care, he dedicates and commits the infant; and who hath said, "Repent and *be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" "For the promise is unto you, *and to your children*,¹ and to all that are afar off, even as many as

¹ This text ought to be seriously considered by those who pretend that there is no warrant for Infant Baptism in the New Testament. What promise is that, which is "unto you, *and to your children?*" The promise which is just mentioned before is none other than that of the Holy Ghost *in Baptism*. How is this promise "to your children," if they are not proper subjects for Baptism? In order to see more clearly the force of the expression, "unto you, and to your children," it should be compared with the similar expressions

the Lord our God shall call." (Acts ii. 38, 39.) In the assurance then that if we humbly dedicate the child to Him, in His own ordinance, and according to His own appointment, He will work in him also *both to will and to do*,—we are bold *in the Lord*, to make those promises for him.

4. Understanding then *the principle* upon in the promises to Abraham respecting circumcision. Gen. xvii. 4—14.

It is particularly worthy of remark, that the two Sacraments of the Old Dispensation, which are more especially copied in the New, were both of them *anterior* to the Levitical, or Legal Dispensation. *Circumcision*, which is the prototype of *Baptism*, was "not of Moses, but of the Fathers," (John vii. 22.) and it was a seal of that *Covenant of Grace*, established with Abraham, which *the Law* (which was four hundred and thirty years after) could not disannul. (Rom. iv. 11, 12. with Gal. iii. 15—18.) So also *the Passover*, which among all the rites of the preceding dispensation, is more especially and evidently the prototype of *the Lord's Supper*, (Matt. xxvi. 17—30. Luke xxii. 13—20. and 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) was also instituted, and enjoined in all its force upon the children of Israel, and those who joined themselves unto them, *previous* to the giving of *the Law*. (Exod. xii.) As these Ordinances, then, were anterior to the Types and Shadows of the Levitical Law, they *substantially* remain when those ceremonies have vanished away,—though the *form* of them is changed to make them more suitable to this last and best

which alone the Christian can venture to make a promise, either for himself or for another, it only remains, that we should *ascertain what warrant the Scripture gives us to promise for others?* which is the particular point of inquiry in the question before us.

ANSWER. This may be best learned from many examples which we find in the Scriptures.

dispensation of God's grace and mercy to men. Is not the argument for Infant Baptism, as deduced from Circumcision, strengthened by this consideration ?

Also let it be observed, that the distinction commonly made between the Old Dispensation and the New, when it is said that the *former* was a visible and external dispensation, and the *latter* a spiritual and internal, is not altogether just. It may be maintained in regard to the *prevailing*, but not as to the *exclusive* character of the two. Both, in fact, were evidently,—in part, spiritual and internal,—and in part, visible and external. And the Old Testament, or Jewish Church, like the Christian, began with a spiritual calling; and the formation of a Visible Church, gradually and naturally (in both cases) rose out of the formation of a truly Spiritual Church. For the beginning of the separation of the Jewish Church, to be visibly and professedly the peculiar inheritance and people of the Lord, is always dated from the Call of Abraham, (and most properly.) But Abraham was certainly called as a *Spiritual* person, and the heir of *Spiritual* promises and privileges. His natural posterity, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, formed of course the *Visible*

(1.) Abraham entered into covenant with God, in regard to circumcision, *for himself and for his seed after him.* Gen. xvii.

(2.) The Israelites covenanted with God to keep the Passover, *for themselves and for their seed.* Exod. xii. 21—28, 42.

(3.) They entered into covenant with God, *for themselves and their seed.* Exod. xix. 8—9;

Church under the Legal Dispensation: and in this were always to be found some truly Spiritual persons, even in the worst of times. (Rom. xi. 1—7.) So also the Gospel Church began with a *Spiritual Calling.* The Disciples who met together for prayer (Acts i. 12—15. ii.) were Spiritual persons. So also were the three thousand, who formed with them the first regular Christian Church. (Acts ii. 41—47.) And doubtless the great multitude of those who were baptized and brought into the pale of the Christian Church in the Apostolic age (and yet by no means *all*) were *Spiritual persons.* Their descendants, and those who in after ages were converted from among the Heathen (some of them spiritually, and some only externally) formed naturally the *Visible Church* under the Gospel Dispensation, just as the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, formed the *Visible Church* before the coming of Christ. And in this there always have been, and always will be, some truly *Spiritual persons:* perhaps far more than we are aware of. The analogy is complete throughout—and therefore from that analogy the Apostle argues. Rom. ii. xi. 1 Cor. x. &c

xxiv. 3—9. Deut. xxix. 10—28. Josh. xxiv. 16—25.

(4.) The Elders of Israel made a promise to the Gibeonites, *for themselves and the whole people, even to remote generations.* So that when Saul violated this promise, four centuries afterwards, it was severely visited. Josh. ix. 3—21. 2 Sam. xxi. 1—9.

(5.) Joshua promised to serve God, *for himself and for his house.* “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Josh. xxiv. 15.

(6.) Hannah promised *for Samuel*, (1 Sam. i. 11, 19—28), that he should be devoted to the Lord, as a Nazarite, all his days; which perhaps of all others is the most exact parallel to the case of sponsors.

(7.) The Jews charged themselves with the expences of the sanctuary, (Neh. x. 32.) *for themselves and their posterity.*

(8.) So also they took *upon themselves and their posterity*, to observe the feast of Purim, from generation to generation. Esther ix. 20, 32.

QUESTION II. *How can thanks be returned*

that every child baptised is regenerate, and the adopted child of God; if a child, then an heir; joint heir with Christ, and, according to the promise, Christ's children, or sheep, no man shall pluck out of his hand? (John x. 27—30.)

ANSWER.—The terms of this question are not quite accurate. We thank God not for *every* child, but for *the particular* child baptised; and this thanksgiving must be taken in connection with the whole Service. If the prayers are offered *in faith*, and the child is presented *in faith*, then also thanksgivings may be returned *in faith*, and in the full assurance that the prayer of faith must be abundantly answered. Mark xi. 24. James i. 6—7. But all who use these, and other of our own excellent formularies, must seriously endeavour to rise to the standard of them. Otherwise *the whole ordinance* becomes a solemn mockery, (being abused by those who make such a thoughtless and unbelieving use of it;) and the thanksgiving of course *just as much* as the rest of the service, *but not more*. The *whole Service* is drawn up for *believers*, (and how could Christian formularies possibly be drawn up for

any others?) and the only proper question respecting the thanksgiving is, Whether it be consistent with the rest of the Service? that is, Whether, if we be sincere and faithful in all the rest of the Service, we can properly and truly unite in this part of it? Observe the standard of faith which is proposed to us in the Exhortation after the Gospel, and the address to the Sponsors, 'Dearly beloved, ye have brought this child,' &c. If those who come to the Ordinance fall far below this standard, that is *their* sin, and *they* are responsible. The Church is not to be blamed, but highly commended, which has such a high and holy, and truly Scriptural standard before us; and could do no otherwise without sanctioning a low and unscriptural standard of religion, and teaching us to rest therein, half-believing, and half-hearted.

The Thanksgiving, like the rest of the Service, is suitable to the case of every child, for whom the prayers were offered up in faith and in sincerity. Nor can it be considered fair and honest to take the Thanksgiving out of the whole Service, of which it is a part; and then

to raise difficulties upon it, which in fact arise from this disconnection.

QUESTION III. *In the promise, in Acts ii. 38, 39, is not repentance attached as a necessary part? and can that promise be laid hold of in the case of children, who have not yet sinned?*

ANSWER. The children *are sinners*, as being the offspring of sinful and fallen Adam; and they are considered as such throughout the Scriptures, treated as such in all God's dispensations, and spoken of as such throughout the whole of the Baptismal Service. *Original sin* is just as much to be repented of as any actual crime which our own hands may have committed. And if we do not repent of original sin, there is every reason to fear that we have no true repentance at all. I must confess, and repent of, Adam's transgression; just as much as if I had committed it in my own person. It is therefore a great mistake to suppose that the children have not yet sinned. David confesses and bewails Original Sin, as the source and aggravation of all the rest, Psalm li. 5; and if it be not both repented of, and (through

the blood of Christ) blotted out and forgiven, it would of itself be sufficient to plunge us into everlasting condemnation: for 'in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.' Art. IX.

With regard to the solemn and responsible office of Sponsor, it must be confessed (as in regard to many other points) that there have been, and still are, great abuses in practice. The light and careless manner in which many persons take upon themselves the office, from mere worldly considerations and respects, and the utter neglect of all its solemn duties afterwards, cannot be too deeply lamented, or too severely reprobated. But this is contrary to the principles of the Church: and it would be just as rational to lay the blame of all the frauds and robberies that are committed in England upon the laws of the land, as to charge those abuses upon the Principles or Formularies of the Church of England. According to the real Principles of our Church, no person ought to be admitted as a Sponsor, who is not a Communicant—'neither shall any person be admitted Godfather or Godmother

to any child at Christening or Confirmation, before the said person so undertaking, hath received the holy Communion.' Canon XXIX. That is to say, no person, who cannot, in a judgement of charity, be considered as a true believer. From all such persons we may reasonably expect a conscientious regard to the duties of the office, as set forth in the Exhortation addressed to them at the conclusion of the Service. And if any one ask what are the particular points to be attended to, or the particular ways in which our duties as Sponsors should be discharged, I would suggest the following hints.

1. *Every Sponsor is bound daily to intercede for his godchild at a Throne of Grace.* The conclusion of the Thanksgiving and Prayer which we offer immediately after the Lord's Prayer, beginning with the words, 'And humbly we beseech Thee to grant,' &c. will furnish a most suitable form or directory for this part of the Sponsor's duty.

2. *He should take suitable occasions to confer with the parents,* to unite in prayer with them for the child, and to point out, in a

kind and affectionate manner, but with that authority too which arises out of the responsibility of his office, any errors or omissions which he observes in the religious instruction or management of the child.

3. *He should take opportunities of seriously and affectionately conversing with the child, or of writing to him, in reference to his baptismal vows and engagements.*

4. *If the parents are removed, the whole care of the religious education of the child of course devolves upon the Sponsors.*

And here I would add, that it would be well for the parents to take opportunities of conferring with the Sponsors, explaining their own difficulties and discouragements, and asking their advice from time to time. This courtesy is due to them whom they have invited to take upon themselves such a responsible office ; and it would greatly assist and encourage them in the discharge of perhaps the most arduous and often the most unthankful part of it.

Having had occasion again to refer to the question of Infant Baptism, I would not dis-

miss that subject without a reference to Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*—more especially to the Summing up of the Evidence on both sides, chap. X. of Part II. pp. 519—534, of the 2nd Edition, 4to. London, 1707; in which the Reader will find abundant proof of the assertions made in page 48, respecting the received Doctrine and Practice of the Church on this point.

September 15, 1834.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND SISTER IN
THE LORD,

“ Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the Seven Spirits which are before His throne ; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.”

Once more I resume the pen, in reference to that important subject which has engaged so large a portion of our correspondence. Important I do indeed consider it; for if we cannot find rest and edification to our souls, and union and communion with our fellow

Christians (so far as it is to be expected upon earth) within the pale of the Church of England, I know not where we are to seek them. When I look upon those who have forsaken her communion, I see that they have but gone on to multiply separation and schism without end ; and the harm and loss which have thereby accrued to their own souls, in all the instances which have come within the sphere of my own observation and knowledge, have been manifest and lamentable. Blessed are they who, after all their wanderings, have returned to this ark ! I cannot think that time and labour lost, which is employed in attaching any one of her children to so dear and venerable a Mother ; or in enabling any soul to enter more spiritually, experimentally, and devotionally into her Services.

I have said a good deal upon the subject of Public Worship, and the provision which our Church has made for the assistance and edification of all her children therein. If I have enlarged upon this subject, it is because I very deeply feel its importance,—especially under present circumstances. For I fear that,

in the present day, there is among us but little of *Public Worship*. There has been so much of strife and division, so much of unholy contention, so little of the spirit of love and union ; that I am afraid, for the most part, Christians come into the House of God to worship *as individuals*, just as much as they do when they enter into their closets. I am greatly afraid that very few, comparatively, do realize as they ought, and as they might, that they are worshipping not as individuals, not as grains of wheat heaped together in a bushel ; but as members of a great congregation,—yea, as members of one **Church**,—one vast and “compacted” body,—scattered abroad indeed, corporeally and visibly, over a large portion of the habitable globe,—yet closely and strongly united, in spiritual and invisible bonds, to offer up, with one heart and one mind, the same prayers and supplications, the same praises and thanksgivings,—to repeat the same Psalms, and hear the same Scriptures read. In all this we ought to realize and feel our union with each other. We should pray, as interested and deeply concerned for

each other's real and eternal welfare ; all for each, and each for all. We should, in all our *Public Devotions* more especially, remember, with feelings of lively affection, that so far as we are really spiritual worshippers, ' we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.' But I have so fully stated my views on this subject in my sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. that I need not say more. I needed not indeed to have said so much to *you*, but it is a subject which is very near my heart, and I can scarcely touch upon it without being carried away with it. I do consider it as the special glory of our Church, that she has made such sweet and abundant provision for the *public worship* of God, for the *real worshipping together* of all her children, wherever they are scattered on the earth. And the more completely we can enter into this, the more truly we can realize our privilege, and really worship together with one mind, one heart, and one mouth ; the greater blessing may we expect in waiting upon God in the ordinances of His house, and the more

abundantly will our souls in all respects prosper.

I might have added much on the beautiful method and arrangement of our Liturgy; but I will only refer to two points, which are especially worthy of attention. 1. The large part assigned to *the congregation* in our Liturgy. How admirably suited to stir them up to a real attention to, and lively interest in, the devotional part of our public Services. 2. The conciseness and number of the prayers of which our Liturgy is composed. How wisely adapted to keep us in continual remembrance of that Heavenly Father, to whom we so repeatedly address ourselves, and of that Mediator, by whom alone we draw near to God, in whose Name every prayer concludes. What wonderful provision is also hereby made for the weakness of *many*, who cannot follow a single long prayer with any intelligence or comfort; and, if they once lose the thread, can scarcely by any means resume it. And let it be remembered, that *all* are liable to occasional distractions from various causes. But our Liturgy is so constructed, that even when

this has been the case, it is easy for the feeblest to resume the thread which had been broken, and soon to re-unite with the Minister and the congregation in the subsequent petitions, even when during some of the preceding the mind has been wandering and distracted ; to which, nevertheless, a serious and devout mind is less liable, when following a truly scriptural and spiritual Liturgy, than in attempting to join in any other kind of prayer or form of worship.'

But while our Church has made such provision for the public and spiritual worship of God, she has been equally mindful of sound doctrine. She has given us a clear, distinct, and comprehensive summary of pure Christian and Evangelical doctrine *in her Articles* ; she has admirably exemplified the faithful and practical preaching of it *in her Homilies*. I would add a few words to what I said in my last upon this point : for I consider that *sound doctrine* and

¹ In the Quarterly Review, No. C. for January 1834, there is an able article on Liturgical Reform, which contains some beautiful remarks on the method and arrangement of our Church Service.

spiritual worship are the two grand essential points to be attended to in the formation and constitution of a Church. And here I must confess, that first of all, the *order* and *arrangement* of *her Articles* is that which commends itself to my judgement, though it is not the point on which I would particularly insist; for if the doctrine be sound, and clearly and fully stated, no wise or Christian man, (one would think) would quarrel about the order or method of it. I will therefore only add, to explain what I mean, that our Doctrine concerning the Trinity, the Natures and Offices of Christ, and the Deity of the Holy Ghost, (on which grand fundamental points every thing else depends) are fitly placed first; thus giving also the first place to those Articles, respecting which there is no controversy between us and that Church from which we have separated; Article I—V. Then the Doctrine of the Church respecting the Scriptures, as the only ultimate appeal and supreme authority in points of faith, and the three Creeds, as acknowledged standards which the ancient Church had transmitted to us, is

clearly stated. Article VI—VIII. To these Articles succeed those which set forth more expressly the way of a sinner's salvation. Article IX—XVIII. In which it is particularly worthy of remark, that the order and method of the Epistle to the Romans, is kept in view, and we have placed the Seventeenth Article, not at the commencement, but towards the conclusion, which is its proper place; for it is far more safe and Scriptural, to consider the deep and mysterious doctrines of which it treats *at the conclusion*, than *at the commencement* of our statement or enquiries. See Rom. viii. 28—xi. 36. in connexion with the preceding part of that Epistle.

But I need not proceed further on this point.—*The clear, distinct, and concise manner in which Christian Doctrine is stated* in our Articles is more particularly to be observed. And how full and clear is our Church upon the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the Person of Christ: first giving the sum and substance of the ancient Creeds, and then expressly referring to them! How strong and express are our statements upon the subject of Origi-

nal Sin and Human Depravity. (Compare Article IX. and X. with the Second Homily, and that for the Nativity.) Of Justification by Faith: (compare Article XI. with the Third Homily :) of Good Works, as the Fruits of Faith: (Article XII—XIV. with the Fourth and Fifth Homilies, and all those which are more especially of a practical character :) of the perfect purity and sinlessness of Christ's human nature, a doctrine so important at present. (Article XV.) Of Predestination and Election. (Article XVII. with the Homily for Rogation Week.) Then again how sober and scriptural are the statements concerning the Church, the Sacraments, and the Ministry! (Article XIX—XXI. XXIII. XXV.—XXIX.) how decided and solemn the testimony which is given against the superstitions, idolatries, and blasphemies of the Church of Rome! (Article XIV. XXII. XXIV. XXV. XXVIII. XXX.—XXXII. compared with the whole of the Homily against Peril of Idolatry, and large portions of the Fifth and several others.) And lastly, how clear and scriptural is the

Doctrine of our Church, as expressed both in the **Articles** and **Homilies**, in regard to Christian obedience, and loyal subjection to the **Rulers** and **Governors** whom God is pleased to set over us ; and how strongly opposed to the usurpations of the Bishop of Rome and the popish priesthood on the one hand, and to the rebellious principles of modern infidelity and radicalism on the other ! I mention this, because I go whole lengths with our pious and excellent **Reformers**, in their *political* as well as their *religious* principles ; and much am I grieved to see so many, both Ministers and people, who profess to belong to this Church, so deeply tainted with the infection of modern liberalism, which is so directly opposed to them, and is indeed the offspring of infidelity.

Having referred so frequently to the **Book of Homilies**, I would further observe, that these admirable compositions not only serve more clearly to explain, and more strongly to enforce, the **Doctrines** of our Church ; but they are also models of faithful preaching. And well would it be for our Church, and our country, if *all* our clergy would study them

accordingly ; and learn from them to preach unto the people, with the same clearness, and with the same force ! This is what, by the solemn vows which they take upon themselves at their Ordination, they are specially bound to do. And what can be more affecting, than the manner in which they are there called, and excited, and encouraged to it ?

Here, perhaps, I may fitly answer a question in your last letter respecting the Church Catechism ; as it stands, of course, in close connexion with the doctrine of our Church, and the instruction which her Ministers are bound to give. I am well aware that it is one of those things against which the opponents of our Church have made great objections : but I am sure with as little reason as I have found in their objections upon other points, if they would but consider the real design and purpose of it. It is entitled in the Prayer Book, 'A Catechism, that is to say, an Instruction to be learned by every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.' It was therefore intended to be taught with *a special reference to Confirmation* ; and not

merely to be *learned* by *rote*, but to be *fully explained* by the teacher, and deeply studied by the learner: for in the office for Baptism, the Sponsors are charged to see that the child be taught, not only 'the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue,' but also, 'all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health;' and when he not only can *say* those three, but is also '*further instructed* in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose,' he is to be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed. Now I am much afraid that multitudes are taught to *repeat* the words of this beautiful Catechism, who are not *instructed* in it at all. And hence arise the objections to the use of it, to which you refer. But it evidently was never intended by our Church, that a mere learning by *rote* should be considered as sufficient. The Catechism was intended to be a summary and the basis of that instruction, which was to be given *previous* to *Confirmation*: and in this point of view, what could be more beautiful or appropriate? For then, surely, the time is

at hand when each individual should begin seriously to enquire, whether really and truly he can lay his hand upon his heart, and make (as in the presence of Almighty God) those solemn professions which are contained in the Catechism. But that those, who are charged with the religious instruction of children, should indolently content themselves with teaching them to repeat it as a mere lesson learned by rote, without any consideration of the meaning and application to themselves of the solemn expressions it contains; this is evidently quite beside the intention of those who compiled it. Therefore I should consider it as a matter requiring discretion and sound judgement, to decide *how far*, or rather *how soon*, it should be used in Sunday Schools; in which, doubtless, many of the children are so young and ignorant, as to require much of the simplest elementary instruction (especially in the historical parts of the Scriptures) before they are in a fit state to learn and study the Catechism; which is a very rich and comprehensive summary of practical and experimental Christianity—not a Catechism

of mere *information*, (which is first needed) but of Christian *profession*. But when the children are tolerably well acquainted with Scripture facts, and we need something as the basis and summary of Evangelical instruction, I know not what could be found more excellent; unless indeed we could introduce the larger Catechism, mentioned in the seventy-ninth Canon, which was written in Latin by Dr. Alexander Nowell, dean of St. Paul's, regularly approved and adopted by Convocation in 1562, and afterwards translated into English; ¹ but this excellent work has, alas! fallen into great and most unmerited

¹ Nowell's Catechism was first drawn up at the request of secretary Cecil. It was revised, approved, and adopted by Convocation in 1562; and first published in Latin at the request of the two Archbishops in 1570; it was afterwards translated into English by Thomas Norton, and printed at London in 1571, in 4to. *In Latin* it is to be found in Randolph's *Enchiridion Theologicum*, Oxford 1812, 2 vols 8vo. and it was reprinted along with J. G. Vossii *Disputatio Theologica de Sacramentorum Vi et Efficacia*; in a thin 8vo. volume, by Dr. W. Cleaver, (I suppose) Bishop of Chester; Oxford, 1795. The only modern reprint in *English* which I have seen is in the eighth and last volume of the Rev. L. Richmond's *Fathers of the Church of England*.

neglect ; so that I know not where an English copy, in a separate form, is to be found, though it is evidently one of the authoritative writings of our Church. But in giving instruction out of the Catechism, let the teacher take heed that he deal faithfully with the conscience of the learner. Here doubtless there is almost everywhere too much to be lamented and bewailed ; but the fault is not in the Catechism, but in the mode of teaching it. If the teachers do not spiritually understand it themselves, what is it but a blind leading of the blind ? and what, according to the Scriptures, will be the end thereof ?

And here I would observe, that the Church Catechism is drawn up upon the same principle which runs through the Liturgy ; and which was also adopted by the Reformers generally in all the Catechisms which I have had an opportunity of examining ;—that is to say, it is a *Christian Catechism*, drawn up for a professed believer ; and on the supposition that he is truly upright and sincere in his profession. In short it is designed to teach him, briefly but distinctly, what it is that he

professes, when he professes and calls himself a Christian. And how can he be prepared for Confirmation, unless such instruction is given to him? What can be more suitable as the basis of such instruction in the first instance, or as a mean of keeping him in continual remembrance of it afterwards, than such a brief and comprehensive formulary; every word of which, without difficulty, may be committed to memory by every one?

But I said that the same principle was adopted by other Reformers; and, in illustration of this fact, I will only refer to the Heidelberg Catechism,¹ both because it is one which, for more than 200 years, has been used in

¹ A copy of this Catechism in Latin, is to be found in the *Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum*, printed at Geneva 1650 and 1654, and in the *Sylloge Confessionum*, printed at Oxford in 1804 and 1827. The English Churches in Holland (which are a branch of the Dutch Church, and under the direction of the same Classes and Synods, only with the service in English for the convenience of English and American Captains and Seamen) use an old Translation, which was reprinted in the Christian Review for 1828, pp 509—527. A new Translation was lately published in a small volume; but the sweetness and vigour of the original are sadly lost in the version. The old Translation is much better.

some of the Reformed Churches abroad; and because it was particularly commended by some of the most eminent of our English Divines, who publicly declared at the Synod of Dordrecht, that neither their own, nor the French Churches, had one so suitable and excellent;—that those who compiled it were men remarkably endowed and assisted by the Spirit of God therein;—that, in many of their writings, they had excelled other Divines; but that, in the composition of this Catechism, they had outdone themselves. It begins thus.

“ Q. What is thy only comfort in Life and Death ?

A. That both in soul and body, whether I live or die, I am not mine own, but belong wholly unto my most faithful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; who by His precious blood most fully satisfying for all my sins, hath delivered me from all the power of the devil, and so preserveth me that, without the will of my Heavenly Father, not so much as an hair may fall from my head: but rather on the contrary, all things must be subservient to my Salvation. Wherefore by His Spirit also He assureth

me of everlasting life, and maketh me ready and prepared, that henceforth I may live to Him."

This is evidently such language as is suitable to a child of God ; this answer can be given truly and sincerely, only by "such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things ;" as our XVIIth Article so beautifully expresses it. So also, in another part of the same Catechism, we read :—

"Q. What believest thou concerning the Holy Ghost?

A. First, that He is true and co-eternal God with the eternal Father and the Son ; Secondly, that He is also given unto me, to make me, through a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me for ever."

Does not this remind you of that expression in our Catechism, "I believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God?"—I need not multiply

extracts : but will only add that the Deputies of all the Reformed Churches concurred with our English Divines in approving this Catechism, and in advising the Dutch Churches to persevere in the use of it. It is therefore evident that all the Reformed Churches concurred in this principle,—that all persons, in making a profession of Christianity at Confirmation, should make such a profession as implied that they were true Believers : that is to say, “ Members of Christ, and children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” And for this obvious reason, that if such a profession be not a truly *Christian* profession, it is altogether vain and idle. Then, of course, those who make this profession are bound, and should be faithfully urged, to examine themselves whether they are making it *intelligently* and *sincerely* : even as the Scripture says, “ *Examine yourselves* whether ye be in the faith ; *prove your own selves*. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? ” 2 Cor. xiii. 5. So also, in the end of the Catechism, we are reminded that it “ is required of them who

come to the Lord's Supper ; *To examine themselves* whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death ; and be in charity with all men." Nor is it easy to conceive at what period such self-examination could better begin, than when they are learning and studying the Catechism, in prospect of that solemn Ordinance, for which it is intended to prepare them ; and in which they solemnly renew, ratify, and confirm the solemn promise and vow that was made in their name at their baptism.

To sum up what I have said on this subject in few words, I would say, that if any persons object to the use of the Catechism in Sunday Schools, on account of anything contained in the Catechism itself, I think that their objections are altogether so vain and frivolous, as to prove that they had better leave the work of teaching alone, till they are better instructed themselves. But if the objection arises only from the consideration of the ignorance of the children, I should say : that it is the duty of

every judicious teacher to consider, what order and method is to be pursued in instructing the children under his care ; and as I would not put the Bible into the hands of a child, till he was able to read it ; so neither would I set him to learn the Catechism, till he had made some progress in reading the Bible, and getting acquainted with the main points of the Evangelical history. But I would have *every child* learn the Catechism before leaving the Sunday School ; and should think that I had neglected a main part of what he had come to such a school to learn, if I had not earnestly endeavoured to instruct him in it thoroughly. Nor do I understand how any true Churchman can hesitate upon this point. I will only add that judging from what I have seen in Sunday Schools, I am afraid that there is great need of much more faithfulness and solemn earnestness in dealing with the consciences of the children than is commonly to be found in Sunday-School Teachers. Immortal souls are at stake. And merely to load the memory, or even inform the mind, will profit nothing. Our main concern in Sunday Schools,

and in all Catechetical Instruction, is *with the heart and conscience*; and all *head knowledge* should be communicated only in subservience to our earnest, faithful, and affectionate addresses to *the heart*. Proceeding upon this principle, I have myself experienced a very abundant blessing upon the use of the Church Catechism: and can, from my own experience and observation, most cordially recommend it as an admirable basis for Evangelical Instruction.

But having been led by your enquiries about the Catechist, to refer to the views of other Reformed Churches, I would speak yet further upon the many points of perfect agreement and harmony between the Church of England and other Daughters of the Reformation. For the fact is, that in most of those points, which are so much objected to in the Church of England, we do not stand alone: but the views maintained by our Church are those which were maintained by the Reformed Churches generally; and even where other Churches have adopted different views or plans, they have not condemned ours.

The Harmony of the Confessions of the Reformed Churches upon all those points of Doctrine, which more especially led to their separation from the Church of Rome is well known, and has often been insisted upon.¹ And on this subject I need not here enlarge: for certainly *this* is not the ground upon which Dissenters would attack us. But it is worthy of remark, that this Harmony and Agreement extends to many points which are not so directly involved in the Romish Controversy, if at all. For example, *the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, as taught in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds*, are distinctly recognized by *all* the Reformed Churches. Some of them agree with us in publishing those Creeds among their Symbolical writings. Those therefore, who are indistinct and dubious respecting these Doctrines, have no claim to be considered as real and sound Protestants:

¹ See the *Harmonia Confessionum*, published at Geneva, in 1581, in the name of the Dutch and French Churches; afterwards translated into English, and printed at Cambridge in 1586: and the *Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum* (a still more valuable work) Geneva, 1654.

they forsake the principles of the Reformation and of the Primitive Church at once.

So also *all* the Reformed Churches which came out and separated themselves from the Church of Rome, and fought the battle of Protestantism, till they had made their position good and secure, agreed in setting forth *clear and full Confessions of their Faith*. Indeed they were compelled to do it by the circumstances of the conflict in which they were engaged: nor could they have effectually maintained that conflict, or made good their position, without them. We find, therefore, that none of them hesitated when a suitable occasion presented itself. To reject Creeds and Confessions, is therefore *not* one of the Principles of the Reformation, but *the contrary*. To adopt them and maintain them, as absolutely necessary to the formation and subsistence of a Church, is perfectly consistent with the Principles and Practice both of the Primitive and the Reformed Churches. Those who reject them, do in fact depart from the Principles of sound Protestantism, and run into the same sort of delusive vagueness and

uncertainty that characterizes the Church of Rome; who involves the greatest part of her Doctrines in an impenetrable mist, for the purposes of fraud and evasion and delusion. The whole class of Arian and Socinian heretics have constantly had recourse to the same dishonest policy: which can serve no cause or purpose but those of falsehood. But I have discussed this question elsewhere; and I need not transcribe what I have already written and printed on the subject.

Again—*All* the Protestant Churches were perfectly agreed on *the principle of an Establishment*; and even the whole of the Non-Conformists in our own Country, till a very late period. They clearly understood that it belongs to a Christian Government, both to make a public profession of the Christian Faith, and, in its paternal care for the welfare of its subjects, to make due provision for their regular Religious instruction,—even as every pious and conscientious parent would be careful to make provision for the regular Religious instruction of his family.

Nor can any objection be raised against the one, which is not equally valid against the other: for which, however, we have full Scriptural warrant, both in the Old Testament and the New. (See Gen. xviii. 17—19; Ex. xii. 24—27; xiii. 14—16. Deut. vii. 4—9; xi. 18—21. Prov. xxii. 6. Eph. vi. 4.) And on this point it should be remembered, that the propriety of arguing from the duty of a parent to that of a King or Government, is manifest from this circumstance,— that the duties of obedience and honour to a King or Government, must either be deduced from the fifth Commandment, “ Honour thy father and thy Mother,” or they are not contained in the Decalogue at all. Is it right and Scriptural to deduce the duties of subjects from those of children; and yet not right and Scriptural to deduce the duties of Kings and Governors from those of parents?

The danger of setting aside the arguments drawn from the Old Testament, I have already endeavoured to point out: but as it is very common to object to some of the arguments thence derived in favour of Establishment

because the Jewish Polity was a Theocracy, to which we have nothing corresponding under the Christian Dispensation ; I would here take occasion to observe that this objection is by no means so well founded as those who bring it are apt to suppose. The Nation of Israel, when it was first established in Canaan, and *during the time of the Judges*, was indeed a *Theocracy*, properly so called—and, as such, remarkably distinguished from every form of Government which has elsewhere existed in the world. But under the Government of the Kings, it was no longer a *Theocracy*, but a *Monarchy* ;—in its general *political* principles, very closely resembling the other Monarchies of the world. For this the People desired ; “ Now make us a king to judge us *like all the nations* : ” whereupon the Lord said, “ They have rejected ME, that I should not reign over them : ” (1 Sam. viii. 4—9) So that here was an end of the Theocracy ;—brought about indeed by the sinful impatience of the People, but yet in fulfilment of the purposes of God, who had even made provision in the Law of Moses, for a period in which a King

should be set over His people. (Deut. xvii. 14—20.) And God was graciously pleased to bless this form of Government, even when He had severely rebuked the people for desiring it (1 Sam. xii.) ; so that the nation of Israel thenceforward became *a Monarchy, professing the true Religion, and under the peculiar protection of God.* This is what we desire to have under the Gospel dispensation. We are not warranted to set up a *Theocracy* ;—for this pertains to God alone ; and we expect that in the fulness of time He will set up a *Theocracy*, (if I should not rather say a *Christocracy*,) when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, (Rev. xi. 15.) But in the mean time, that in the state of Israel which is imitable, we may imitate: or, in other words, we may have Kingdoms and Governments, *professing the true religion, and under the peculiar protection of God.* And that which was sinful and blameable *in them*, (because it was a forsaking of God, and a removing of themselves further from Him) cannot be so considered in us—for it is *a drawing near to Him* ;— as near indeed as we can.

It might indeed be easily and clearly proved, were this the time or place to discuss the subject at large, that the principle of rejecting either Creeds or Confessions, or Establishments, has its root in a specious form of Infidelity: though I shall readily allow that many who adopt the principle, are not by any means aware of its real origin. It is however worthy of note, that the Dissenters have given us but too much reason to believe, that they are not sincere and upright in their opposition to Establishments: for when they have had the opportunity of setting up an Establishment after their own fancies, they have very gladly and readily availed themselves of it. This is manifest from the conduct of the Missionaries and Committee of the London Missionary Society in the Islands of the South Sea; in which they themselves have not scrupled to form that alliance between Church and State, which *here* they denounce as unhallowed!¹

¹ See Dr. Dealtry's Sermon, preached before the Prayer Book and Homily Society last year, and the notes appended to it; in which this fact is abundantly proved by copious extracts from the Reports of the London Missionary Society.

But further: the Reformed Churches generally were not *upon principle* opposed to *the use of a Liturgy*. The generation of the Reformers had passed away, and a new generation had grown up, amidst the bitterness of those disputes about non-essentials, which so greatly impeded the progress of the Reformation, before this principle of absolute opposition to all Liturgical forms had come to its height. When our own Liturgy was drawn up, in the reign of Edward VIth, it was transmitted to all the Reformed Churches for their examination; and it was published with their general concurrence and approval: those things being altered in the second edition, which seemed questionable in the first. Nor was this all:—The Lutheran Churches have a Liturgy which closely resembles our own, and which seems to have been commonly used,¹ till the fearful inroads of Neology led men to pour contempt upon every thing which served to perpetuate the knowledge of the real doctrines of the

¹ See a pamphlet entitled “The Lutheran Liturgy proved to agree with the book of Common Prayer of the Church of England.” 8vo. London, 1715.

Reformation. The French Churches, which have adopted Calvin's confession and Catechism, so long as they continued in any sort of Evangelical purity, used to begin their Public Worship with a confession of sins drawn up by Calvin himself; and in the administration of Baptism entirely, and of the Lord's Supper partly, they made use of regular Liturgical forms. Several of the Churches in Switzerland had their Liturgies; ¹ and it is well known that John Knox was the author of those solemn and impressive sentences in our Communion Service, with which the consecrated elements are put into the hands of the communicant; and he himself drew up a Liturgy for

¹ See a book entitled " *Liturgia Tigurina*, or the book of Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments, for the Churches in the Canton of Zurich, translated into English, by John Conrad Werndly," a Swiss by birth, but a Minister of the Church of England; printed at London in 1693; from the preface to which it appears, that the ministers of that Canton were strictly bound to the use of that Liturgy, and not permitted to set it aside, or alter it. Also another book entitled, "The Liturgy used in the Churches of Neufchâtel, with a letter from the learned Dr. Jablonski, concerning the nature of Liturgies; to which is added, the Form of Prayer, lately introduced into the Church of Geneva." 4to. London, 1712.

**the use of the Reformed Churches in Scotland.¹
The Dutch Churches have a Liturgy, in which**

¹ This seems to be the same which is contained in a book entitled, "The Service, Discipline, and Form of the Common Prayer and administration of the Sacraments, used in the English Church of Geneva. As it was approved by that most reverend Divine M. John Calvin, and the Church of Scotland. Humbly presented to the most High Court of Parliament, this present year, 1641." 4to. London. 1641. For some of the Prayers have especial reference to the state and circumstances of Scotland; others are expressly said to be "used in the Churches of Edinborough."

There is in the British Museum, a copy of a very rare book entitled "*Liturgia Suecunæ Ecclesiæ Catholice et Orthodoxæ conformis*;" in Latin and Swedish; which is the original Liturgy of the Reformed Churches in Sweden, drawn up and subscribed by the Archbishop of Upsal, and the Bishops and Clergy of the various Dioceses of Sweden. 4to. Stockholm, 1576.

Also, in regard to this part of our subject, it is well worthy of observation that the Bohemian Churches (of which the Moravian is a branch) which deduce their origin from the Waldenses, who from the earliest ages have continued pure, and have both been preserved from, and have protested against, the corruptions of Popery;—are both Episcopal in their form of government, and still retain and use their ancient Liturgy. The same is to be observed respecting the Syrian Churches which found refuge in India, and still exist among the mountains of Malabar. See Pearson's Life of Dr. Buchanan. Vol. II. pp. 64—99.

there are forms of Prayer before and after the Sermon, and for various occasions more especially for opening and closing the meetings of the Consistory ; there is a regular office for the administration of Baptism (which it would be well worth while to compare with our own) as also for the Holy Communion,—for the ordination of Ministers,—for the confirmation of Elders and Deacons, and for the exercise of the discipline of the Church, in pronouncing or removing the sentence of excommunication. The first mentioned forms of Prayer have indeed fallen into disuse, which is much to be lamented ; for never once in the whole course of my residence in Holland, and frequently as I have attended the Service of the Dutch Churches, did I hear a prayer that, for real spirituality, devotion, and comprehensiveness, could be compared with these forms of Prayer, which I found among the symbolical writings of those Churches. And this is not all ;—for I have heard prayers in the Dutch Churches in which no Christian could join !—in which there was no allusion to the Name and Mediation of Christ,—no supplication offered for

the influences of the Holy Spirit,—no recognition of any of the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity ; but a mere *Deistical* prayer. So that the whole Service from beginning to end was utterly barren. In the Sermon, there was no mention of the Name of Christ, except as one might have mentioned the name of Socrates or Plato, and the prayers were all of a piece with the Sermon, and in the very same spirit. All was, *to the Christian mind*, utter desolation. No Christian prayers or praises offered, no Christian Doctrine preached, no Scriptures read, excepting the few words of a text, which was miserably perverted in the Sermon. And to all this must those Churches be perpetually *liable*, in which *all* is left entirely dependent upon the will, and fancy, and talent of the Minister. If he is unsound, all becomes unsound together ; there is no more worship of that God whom the Scriptures reveal—no more spiritual and Christian Devotion, than there is Christian instruction and edification in the Sermon ; not to mention (though this is highly important) that there is nothing in the Devotional formularies of such a Church, to set

bounds and limits to the errors and heresies which the Minister might broach in his Sermons. Too many Sermons have indeed been preached in the Churches of our Establishment in which there was *no Gospel*; but we have not had our Churches deluged with the open, shameless, undisguised preaching of Arianism, and Socinianism, and Infidelity, like the vast majority (alas!) of the Churches of the continent; though they boasted all the while of the name of Protestant and Reformed. The evil in its worst form, in the Church of England, has been, comparatively speaking, only *negative*; in the Churches of the continent (and not unfrequently in Dissenting Chapels here at home, though our admirable Liturgy and Evangelical Articles have doubtless exercised *indirectly*, in very many cases, a restraining influence there,) the evil has been, even to the most horrible degree, *positive, raging, and rampant*. *You*, my dear Sister, can well understand how important, yea, how blessed it is, to have evangelical prayers and the abundant reading of the Scriptures secured to us,—however blind and ignorant the Minister may happen to be.

You will perceive, my dear Christian friend, that I am taking the full license of a letter writer, to digress from time to time when anything occurs to me, that bears upon my main subject; and I know you will excuse it. But to return to the points on which, if the other Reformed Churches did not agree with us, they took very different ground from that which is taken by our more modern opponents, I may mention that those Churches, and those eminent individuals, who really fought the battle of the Reformation, were far from that undisguised and determined hostility to Episcopacy, which is now manifested by too many. The government of the Reformed Church in Sweden, was committed to an Archbishop and seven Bishops, who (like those in our own country) had (by virtue of their office) seats in the great Council of the nation. In Denmark also, the title and office of Bishops was retained, though they had less power than in Sweden. The Lutheran Churches in Germany universally, though they rejected the name and title of Bishop, yet retained the office, under the name of Superintendent.

There is good reason to believe that if Calvin had lived, a plan would have been formed and carried into execution, for bringing those Churches which bear his name into union and agreement with our own upon this point;¹ and many who were zealous for setting up and maintaining a different form of government, *in their own Churches*, were far from any wish to interfere with, or disturb, the form which was adopted in *ours*.² Some of the

¹ Calvin says, in his Treatise, “*De necessitate reformationis Ecclesiae*,” “Let them give us such an Hierarchy, in which Bishops may be so above the rest, as they refuse not to be under Christ, and depend upon Him as their only Head; that they maintain a brotherly society, &c. If there be any that do not behave themselves with all reverence and obedience towards them, there is no *anathema*, but I confess them worthy of it.” How different was the spirit which dictated such expressions, from that which has been manifested by many in our own Country, (both in earlier and later times,) who yet called themselves disciples of Calvin!

² Zanchius congratulates Grindal on his elevation to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, as a station in which he might be eminently useful to the Church of Christ; Beza, (who on more points than one was a much higher Calvinist than Calvin himself,) writes with the greatest respect and affection to some of our Bishops, and he says especially of the English Churches, in reference to Episcopacy, “*Fruantur sane ista*

foreign Divines lamented that circumstances prevented the introduction of Episcopacy into their Churches: of which number were Francis Gomarus, and Festus Hommius (famous in the history of the Synod of Dordrecht) who were themselves decided Episcopalian in principle.¹ Others who have been educated

Dei beneficentia, quæ utinam sit illi nationi perpetua. "Let them enjoy that blessing of God, which I wish may be perpetual to that nation."

But for the favourable judgement of many of the Foreign Divines, (Reformers, or their immediate successors) upon this point, I would refer my readers to a book entitled, "Confessions and Proofs of Protestant Divines of Reformed Churches, that Episcopacy is in respect of the office according to the word of God, and in respect of the use, the best; together with a brief Treatise touching the original of Bishops and Metropolitans." 4to. Oxford, 1644; a book well worthy of being reprinted at present.

¹ George Carleton, Bishop, then of Llandaff, and afterwards of Chichester, was one of the English Deputies to that Synod. He publicly testified, and called upon the Bishop of Salisbury, (Dr. J. Davenant) who had also been one of the Deputies, to bear witness to the truth of his assertion; "That whereas in the Confession, (i. e. the Belgic Confession) there was inserted a strange conceit of the parity of ministers to be instituted by Christ, I declare our dissent utterly on that point. I shewed that by Christ a parity was never instituted in the Church; that He ordained twelve Apostles; as

in different principles have been unable to resist the arguments drawn from Scripture and antiquity in favour of Episcopacy. Of this number the excellent and truly apostolic Leighton deserves to be particularly mentioned ; who, having been bred up in all the vehemence of the most decided Presbyterian views, afterwards not only accepted the office of a Bishop, but laboured much, though altogether in a truly mild and Christian Spirit, to

also seventy Disciples ; that the authority of the twelve was above the other ; that the Church preserved this order left by our Saviour. And therefore, when the extraordinary power of the Apostles ceased, yet this ordinary authority continued in Bishops who succeeded them ; who were by Apostles left in the government of the Church, to ordain Ministers, and to see that they, who were so ordained, should preach no other Doctrine. That in an inferior degree, the Ministers who were governed by Bishops, succeeded the seventy Disciples,—that this order hath been maintained in the Church from the times of the Apostles. And herein I appealed to the judgement of antiquity, and to the judgement of any learned men now living ; and craved herein to be satisfied if any man of learning could speak to the contrary. To this there was no answer made by ANT. Whereupon we conceived that they yielded to the truth of the protestation. And somewhat I can say of mine own knowledge : for I had conference with divers of the best learned in that Synod. I told them that the cause of all their

introduce Episcopacy into Scotland. To his name should be added that of William Cowper, Bishop of Galloway, at a still earlier period, whose course was somewhat similar; for he had been brought up as a Presbyterian, but afterwards accepted a Bishopric, in which he unfeignedly followed his light, esteeming it "a lawful, ancient, and necessary government." He died in 1619. And to come to our own troubles was this;—that they had not Bishops among them; who, by their authority might repress turbulent spirits that broached novelties. Their answer was, that they did much honour and reverence the good order and discipline of the Church of England; and with all their hearts, would be glad to have it established among them: but that could not be hoped for in their state. Their hope was, that seeing they could not do what they desired, God would be merciful to them, if they did what they could."

I have seen in that Country how continually the Consistory, or one or two evil-minded colleagues in the ministry, could, and did exercise a much more powerful influence to prevent a faithful Minister from doing good, than any Bishop in England either could or would exercise to control or restrict a faithful Clergyman of our Church, from doing his duty, and making full proof of his Ministry,—though he were ever so much opposed to him in sentiment, or even actuated by personal ill-will, (to suppose the worst and most deplorable case which could happen.) What influence is exercised by Dissenting congregations over their Ministers, to restrict them

times; an excellent and highly respected Clergyman of our Church informed me, that a pious Dissenting Minister, the late Dr. Thorp, of Bristol, had in personal conversation assured him, that both himself and another Dissenting Minister, whom he named, were satisfied, that we had Scriptural warrant for our views of Church government, and that they were themselves Episcopalians in principle.

In regard then to the principle of Creeds and Confessions, and of a National Establishment in the full and faithful preaching of the Gospel, and to prevent them from bringing forward wholesome but unwelcome truths, is but too evident to all those who are at all acquainted with the real state and circumstances of Dissenting Ministers and Congregations. I knew one Dissenting Minister who was supposed to have been driven out of his mind, by the continual annoyance he experienced from anonymous letters sent to him by members of his congregation. Certain it is that he was driven from his charge, and has never attempted to resume his Ministry in any other sphere.

It appears that Luther, Bucer, Scultetus, and Isaac Casaubon, maintained *the Divine right of Episcopacy*; See quotations from their writings to this effect, in the book referred to in the preceding note. The latter repeatedly confesses, that *the Church of England came nearer, both to the faith and form of the ancient Catholic Church, than any other.*

ment, modern Dissenters generally take ground which is diametrically opposed to that of the Reformers. *They have entirely forsaken the principles of the Reformation.* In regard to a Liturgy and Episcopacy, in taking the ground of violent uncompromising hostility, they take *very different ground*, both in respect of Doctrine and Charity, from that which was taken by those eminent men, to whom, under God, we owe the blessed Reformation.

And let it be remembered also, my dear Sister, that upon all those points upon which I have been so particularly corresponding *with you*, the Reformed Churches were all of one heart and mind. Some carried their attempts to enforce Discipline somewhat farther than others ; but none imagined that it was possible to exclude all but real believers from the Sacrament. They knew that it belonged to God to judge the heart : and that man must be content with what appears, in a judgement of charity, a fair and credible profession : they were content if they could exclude open scandals. They clearly distinguished between the visible Church and the invisible ; and well knew that

the two could not be made, by any human plans or endeavours, co-extensive. They were equally clear and entirely harmonious upon the Doctrine contained in our twenty-sixth Article,¹ that the unworthiness of Ministers does not hinder the effect of the Sacraments. They were all agreed upon the point of Infant Baptism—and the first Anabaptists were a rebellious and fanatical Sect, which no one would desire to follow, or hold communion with. So also in reference to the lawfulness of Oaths, of exercising the Magistracy, or the profession of the Law, and of bearing arms,—on these points the Reformers of Germany, Switzerland, France, Scotland, and the Netherlands, were all fully agreed with those of England.² And though I am as far as

¹ The Kirk of Scotland, as appears from the first book of Discipline, must, perhaps, be considered as an exception to this statement.

² On the substantial, and even wonderful agreement of the Reformed Churches upon these, as well as other yet more important points of Doctrine, in addition to the *Harmonia Confessionum* (already referred to) it will be well worth the reader's while to consult "The Faith, Doctrine, and Religion, professed and protected in the realme of England and Dominions of the same :" by Thomas Rogers, (one of the original

any man from a disposition to exalt human authority of any kind to a level with God's Word,—much more from setting it above that Word: yet I must confess that the views which have been received and adopted by the Universal Church of Christ, and whereupon so many eminent men, whom God had evidently raised up for the instruction and Reformation

subscribers to the Thirty-nine Articles in 1562. The Preface to my copy is dated 1607, when it seems, the second edition, with considerable enlargements, was published: but it appears to have passed through many editions: mine is dated 1633. This valuable book was dedicated to Archbishop Bancroft, by his 'Grace's poor Chaplain,' and contains, "The said Articles analised into Propositions, and the Propositions proved to be agreeable, both to the written Word of God, and to the extant Confessions of all the neighbour Churches, Christianly Reformed. The Adversaries also of note and name, which from the Apostles' daies, and Primitive Church hitherto have crossed, or contradicted the said Articles in generall, or any particle, or proposition arising from any of them in particular, hereby are discovered, laid open, and confuted. *Perused, and by the lawfull authority of the Church of England, allowed to be publike.*" There can be no doubt that this book sets forth the true Doctrine of the Church of England, as it was clearly understood on all hands from the Consecration of Archbishop Parker, in 1562, till the death of Archbishop Abbott, in 1633.

of His Church, after much thought and enquiry, and much earnest *prayer*, have so fully agreed,—have, and ought to have much weight with me. When after much study and meditation, and much prayer, I have arrived at any conclusion, it is to my mind a very strong confirmation to find that so many wise and holy men,—so many men of deep research and earnest prayer, have come to the same before me. On the other hand, if there were any opinion which I, for myself, were disposed strongly to maintain ; I think it would make me seriously pause, and very strongly suspect myself, if I found the general voice of the Universal Church, and the great body of the Reformers, decidedly opposed to me. And why ? Because I steadfastly believe, not only that the Holy Spirit is promised to guide us into all truth, (John xiv. 26;) but that the same blessed Comforter has also fulfilled that promise ; and has, in all ages, been mightily and graciously working, to guide the elect of God into the knowledge of the Truth ;—more especially when the Church was called, in the Providence of God, and under the

guidance of the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, to express, in Creeds and Confessions, the sum and substance of Scriptural Doctrine upon particular points. But I need not enlarge, as you have seen my little Tract on Creeds and Confessions.¹

Moreover it was our Lord's prayer for His true Disciples, "That they all may be ONE;" —*One* in mind and *one* in heart,—*one* in Doctrine and affection, in faith and holy practice. Therefore I am persuaded that the Spirit of Truth is not a Spirit of *separation*, but a Spirit of *Union*: that it is not His work to lead me into singularity and difference from the Church at large; but into union and agreement with it—into oneness of judgement and of feeling with "the general Assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." And if we duly considered this, we should not be desirous of finding out or devising anything *new*, but should give more earnest heed to find out and cleave to *the Good Old Way* both in Doctrine and Discipline. I allude to Jer. vi. 16.

¹ In the subsequent pages, this little Tract will be found.

And here I would observe the utter hopelessness of all plans and endeavours to *unite* the people of Christ, by striking out anything *new*. Such persons begin their work of *uniting* Christians, by a new and unheard of act of *separation and schism* ;—they turn their backs upon all the wisdom, piety, and experience of former ages at once ;—and is *this* a likely or a proper method to bring about *Union* ? Can we wonder that all such schemes should end in signal failure ? This I may boldly say,—it is the lesson which we learn from duly considering the History of the Church,—that if Christians cannot cordially unite in rallying round the Church of England, and the standard of faith and practice which she has upheld for so many generations, there is no possibility of effecting union among Christians at all. And this I may say, because the Church of England in Government, Discipline, and external form, comes nearest to the Primitive Churches, and has most closely copied the models of Antiquity. She has herself, of all the Reformed Churches, least affected novelty and singularity. With regard to *Doctrine* all

the Reformed Churches are so manifestly one, that I need say no more on that point.

A few words I would add respecting those who dissent from her. Some of these belong to the old Dissenting bodies, or the Three Denominations, as they are commonly called ; the Independents, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists ; others have newly separated to follow schemes or fancies of their own. They agree in this that they make much use of the delusive and dangerous plea of *Conscience* I say the *dangerous and delusive plea*,—for great mistakes upon this subject prevail very widely at present ; which is incontestibly proved by the awful fact, that all manner of heresies and blasphemies, iniquities and abominations, not only may be defended, but actually are defended, under this plea. If any one should venture to say, that when a man can plead neither *Scripture* nor *reason*, his common resource is to plead *conscience*, he would be thought to speak, not only very strongly, but very harshly : but he would be at no loss for facts to support his assertion.¹ And do we

¹ See the whole of the conduct of the Remonstrants, when

not see that conscience is, by too many, exalted above Reason and common sense, and even Scripture itself ? it is exalted above all laws and rules, both human and divine. But when it becomes thus arrogant and overbearing, it is entitled to no respect : it is no better than a Pope set up in the bosom of such as are described in the awful words of Scripture,— “ Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure ; but even *their mind and conscience is defiled*. They profess that they know God ; but in works they deny Him ; being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” (Titus i. 15, 16.) It is greatly to be lamented, that immense multitudes in the present day, from a total misunderstanding and gross abuse of a very common expression, “ the *rights of conscience*,”

cited before the National Synod of the Dutch Churches held at Dordrecht, in 1618,—as related by John Hales) a very impartial witness,—for he was no Contra-Remonstrant, but rather an Arminian at heart) in his Letters to Sir Dudley Carleton, the English Ambassador at the Hague. These letters are published in Hales’s Golden Remains, 8vo. London, 1665 ; and the letters to which I particularly refer, are dated Dec. 17th 1618 to Jan. 15th 1619, pp. 432 to 460.

are disposed to give to this Pope unbounded license ; and actually (because he usurps such an imposing name) would permit him to commit all manner of atrocities, not only without punishment, but without reproof. But while we hear so much of the *Rights of Conscience*, it might be of the greatest advantage to multitudes to hear something of its *Duties* : for—little as this is generally understood or considered, it is a most important truth, that, *except in humble subjection to the Word of God*, even Conscience is not worthy to be heard or regarded. Before any man pleads *Conscience*, or presents his petition for the *Rights of Conscience*, he should therefore see to it well,—First, *that he makes conscience of submitting unreservedly and implicitly to the Word of God, on every question both of faith and practice*; and Secondly, *that he makes conscience of submitting himself “ to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake,”* (1 Peter ii. 13 ; Matt. xxiii. 1—3 ; Titus iii. 1.) *until he can clearly shew that such ordinance is plainly opposed to God’s Word* ; and therefore can calmly and honestly plead Acts iv. 19 ; and v. 29. “ We

ought to obey God rather than men." And let him remember that the *onus probandi* lies upon *him*: he has little pretension to conscience who casts it upon *another*. When we see a man earnestly desiring and endeavouring to act thus, even amidst the remains of much darkness, ignorance, and infirmity, we should love and honour him, though his Conscience be yet far from fully enlightened. And we may be sure that one grand mark of real conscientiousness will be, that he will labour to get his conscience more and more enlightened: and in the meantime will be *humble and tender*, and not censorious and overbearing: nor will he be continually pleading *his own Conscience* (which no one can search into) but **GOD'S WORD**, which is the rule of Conscience and of everything else, and lies open to the examination and judgement of others.

I have enlarged upon this point, my dear Sister, in a manner which may at first appear to you to be needless, because it is a point on which fearful errors prevail;—and these must be, partly at least, traced up to the Puritans,

whom the modern Dissenters generally consider as their forefathers. It is very important to observe, that our Reformers and Martyrs understood the nature and principles of Christian Duty, and the real Rights of Conscience, far better than their Puritan successors ; they shew, on all points connected with the subject, a far more excellent spirit ;—and it is deeply to be regretted, that the example of the Puritans has been continually proposed for imitation, rather than that of the Reformers. The more I look into the subject, the more I am convinced that in *every respect*, this is matter of deep regret ; but very especially in regard to the subject which I have just been discussing. Not that I would for one moment put the Puritans on a level with their degenerate descendants ; for to several of them I am greatly indebted ; and have learned much from them which I have found highly useful, both as a Christian and a Minister. But when I look into the controversial writings, *even of Dr. John Owen*, against the Church of England, I am grieved and astonished, that so great a man should urge such frivolous

objections, and in such a captious spirit. When I turn from him to the Acts and Monuments of our Reformers and Martyrs, as I find them in old John Fox, I cannot but be struck with the difference. And when I turn again to modern Objectors and Separatists, this difference is still more striking.

And here, my dear Sister, let me digress a little ;—for the difference between the Reformers and the Puritans is well worthy of some serious consideration ; more especially as during the past and present generations, there has been a very general disposition in the religious world, to learn Divinity and the most important principles, rather from the latter, than from the former. It may therefore seem very bold and presumptuous in any one to say, what I nevertheless feel called upon to say respecting them. But when I actually institute the comparison between the Puritans and the Reformers, I am compelled to the conclusion that the spirit of the former, as a body, was by no means the real spirit of Christian Martyrs. I deem it important to say this now, because as you well know, my own impression

is, that the present aspect of the times calls upon us very deeply and earnestly to consider what that spirit really is; for no one can pretend to say how soon we may be called to exercise it. This conviction I have expressed in my Sermon on the state of the Country, from Isaiah v. 3—5; (see p. 202) and certainly the events which have occurred since it was written, have only tended to deepen that conviction.

I am by no means prepared to justify all the measures taken after the Restoration with regard to the Non-Conformists. I think that the calm and Christian dignity which belongs to the Church of England was in several respects sadly forgotten; and the *natural* exasperation which the conduct of her adversaries, from the time of Elizabeth downwards, had been but too much calculated to excite, was suffered to influence too far both men and measures. Our Cranmers, Parkers, Grindals, and Jewels, would have shewn a different spirit; and I cannot doubt that their meekness and judgement would have proved, at such a period, a great blessing to the Church and to the Country. Still less am I disposed to say one word

in excuse of the cruelties and atrocities which were perpetrated in Scotland during the reign of Charles II; they were alike abhorrent to Religion and humanity. But I am not here discussing the conduct of men, who had not the least pretensions to Religion: I wish to speak a little of those, who not only made a very high profession of it, but have been highly commended and extolled as Christian Confessors and Martyrs. When so high a claim is advanced on their behalf, it is necessary to try them by the highest and purest standard; and the conduct which might pass without remark or censure in all ordinary cases, may well be subjected to the severest scrutiny, in reference thereto. For as it has well been said,

A Christian is the highest style of man, so also, with equal truth it may be said, that a Martyr is the highest style of Christian. The brightest example that can be proposed to us in any mere man, is that of Christian Confessor and Martyr, rightly so called; and we are called upon to examine, with the strictest regard to Scripture, the claims of those on

whom so high a title is bestowed, and who are thereby so prominently held forth for admiration and imitation.

Very great and various mistakes have been made by those who are disposed to regard in that light, either the Non-Conformists in England, or the Covenanters in Scotland. *It is not suffering for conscience' sake, but suffering for Christ's sake, which makes a Martyr.* The man who suffers and dies for firmly maintaining his *own opinion*, may expect and receive the meed of human praise, from those who are content to consider him as a merely natural character ; and those who inflict upon him sufferings and death, may be wholly inexcusable ; but to give such a man a *Martyr's praise*, is altogether overlooking or confounding the real nature of things ;—for in a Christian point of view such a man deserves not praise, but censure : not even excuse, but deep and solemn condemnation ;—for self-opiniatedness and obstinacy are awful characteristics of the rebellious children of fallen Adam ; and he who dies *for his own opinion*, is not so much a Martyr as a suicide. But when a man under

teaching and influence from on high, has utterly renounced his own wisdom and his own will; when he has trampled in the dust *all his own opinions*, to sit as a little child *at the feet of Jesus*;—when simple and unfeigned love to that blessed Redeemer, (*whom having not seen he loves, and in whom, though now he sees Him not, yet believing, he can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; 1 Pet. i. 8.) and love to His revealed truth, and love to His Church and people, makes him willing and ready to “suffer all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory,” (2 Tim. ii. 10;) and even to lay down his life *for his Redeemer’s sake*,—then it is, that he may be considered, honoured, and loved *as a Martyr*. The true spirit of a Martyr therefore is not a spirit of pride and obstinacy, nor of martial courage; but a spirit of profound humiliation, of utter self-renunciation, of thankful resignation and submission, of tender love and meekness. Nor let me forget that which is so strikingly set forth in the brief, but most instructive and affecting account, which is given

us in Scripture, of the first Martyr of the Christian Church. *He followed the example of his Master, in praying for his murderers*: (compare Acts vii. 60. with Luke xxiii. 34.) And when it was commonly said of Cranmer, “ Do but my Lord of Canterbury a shrewd turn, and he is your friend for ever,” we see in that eminent man a plain indication of a truly Martyr spirit. Many beautiful examples of the same spirit are to be found in Fox. And it may be truly said, and firmly maintained, that he who has not learned to obey that difficult but sublime and blessed precept, “ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. v. 44.) is ill prepared to strive for the Martyr’s crown. It is *love* which makes *him* firm and courageous, which inspires *him* with zeal and fortitude: “ For the love of Christ constraineth him.”—(2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) And not his own opinion, nor the opinion of other men, but *the plain Word of God*, is the rule and warrant of his conduct. Therefore he does not suffer or contend for

things indifferent, but for substantial and soul-saving Truth.

Here then I see the great deficiency of the Non-Conformists and the Covenanters. I can make all allowances and excuses for them, *as men* who, in many cases, were most cruelly and unjustly oppressed : I can well understand how *human feeling* will rise against such unjust and cruel oppression. But I am called upon to consider them *as Christian Martyrs* ; and, with the help of God's word, to weigh their conduct in the balances of the Sanctuary. *Then* I see them sadly and bitterly contending, not with the hosts of hell and the servants of Anti-christ, but with their brethren ;—I see them contending for things indifferent, to the unavoidable dishonour and neglect of essential and saving Truth ;—I see them contending for things which have no certain warranty in Holy Scripture, (to say the least :)—and if, on calm and full investigation, they are found to be things *contrary* to Scripture, how sad and awful to contend and to suffer for such ! for then it is contending and suffering merely for *their own opinion*, in opposition to God's word. I see

too that (looking upon them as a body, and with only a few honourable exceptions) the principles of willing submission to constituted authorities in Church and State are totally wanting ;—and their political principles are unscriptural and awful in the extreme ; such as could only be drawn from the arrogant schools of king-dethroning Popery on the one hand, or from the polluted fountains of Infidelity on the other. I see men, with the Bible in their hands, and the highest profession of Religion in their mouths, lifting up their hands in rebellion against their lawful king, deposing him from his throne, sitting in judgement upon him, and embruing their hands in his sacred blood ! And alas ! those who could tamely sit by, and suffer such things, without rising as one man in his defence, by sinful connivance were accessories to the crime. I see too a sad want of the meekness and gentleness of Christ in their conduct towards their brethren who differed from them ; and the spirit of schism among them, rending the Church to pieces, on account of things non-essential or indifferent,—even while they could not, and did not deny, that

all saving and essential truth was maintained by that Church from which they separated.

These last remarks apply chiefly to the Non-Conformists in England. I have not had such ample opportunities of information respecting the Covenanters in Scotland : so that I do not well *know* how many bright exceptions to my statements might be found ; but looking partly at the obvious facts of History, and partly at the writings of some of their defenders and apologists, which have fallen in my way, I *fear* that what I have said applies with still greater force to them. It is sad to see men so fiercely and pertinaciously contending, not for the essentials of Christianity, but for the mere forms of it ;—and those (I am fully satisfied) forms of man's invention and device, contrary to Scripture and the customs of the primitive Church. And when I read of those, who considered themselves as persecuted for the cause of Christ, meeting to hear a discourse, not on the love of Christ, and the saving truths of the Gospel, but against, “ the execrable evils of tyranny,”—(I quote alas ! not from an enemy, but from one of their

apologists)—and prepared to follow up the principles to which they were listening by an immediate appeal to the sword,—whatever excuses I can make for men almost driven mad by oppression, and merely considered as *men*,—every *Christian* principle and feeling within me is revolted and deeply wounded ; I can here discover *no trace* of the conduct and character of *Christian Martyrs*. I should be very sorry to make too sweeping assertions, and can truly say, it will do my soul good to hear of multiplied exceptions ; but among the Scottish Covenanters, I discover many instances of furious and even murderous fanaticism,—and a fearful taint of such a spirit seems to me to have been very widely diffused among them. Therefore without at all intending to question their soundness as a body upon vital points, or the vital Religion, and various graces which adorn the character of the true believer, which appear in many of them ; and certainly without at all desiring even to extenuate the conduct of their persecutors and oppressors, I can (upon Christian grounds) by no means defend or justify *them*. Instead of awarding

to them the praise and honour that belongs to the Martyrs of Jesus, it is my duty to warn every real Christian, most earnestly and affectionately, against the spirit which they manifested, as evidencing sad deficiency in some very important and lovely points of the Christian character. And what shall we think of them, upon whom the meekness and love of the apostolic Leighton could not make the least impression? I cannot wonder that he should say at length, 'would they have held communion with the Church of God at the time of the Council of Nice, or not? If they should say not; he would be less desirous of entering into communion with them; since he must say of the Church at that time—*Let my soul be with theirs.*'

In speaking of the spirit of those whom I am here constrained to censure, I should be quite willing to argue the point upon the supposition, that their adversaries were as much in the wrong as they themselves seem to imagine. Still, when I compare their conduct and spirit with that of the Reformers and Martyrs towards Popish persecutors and inqui-

sitors, I cannot but see and declare, that it was not the spirit and conduct which we see and admire *in them*, or which we could propose to others as consistent with the high and holy standard *they* have set before us. Those that humbly desire the Crown of Martyrdom,—yea, and those that only desire to hold communion with such, and to be gathered with them hereafter,—have need to cultivate a very different spirit: which may the God of peace and love pour out abundantly upon all His people !

I need not write to *you* respecting the bitter and worldly spirit of the great body of the Dissenters, in their present attacks upon the Church ; nor point out how commonly their plea of *Conscience* proves, upon examination of their own writings and arguments, to be no better than *Covetousness*. The Separatists whom you have met with, and who have so much perplexed and harassed your mind for a season, are (I am convinced) of a very different stamp ; and I can well believe that they have much of Christian earnestness and zeal. But from your own accounts, they are evidently

(as Christians) very young and inexperienced ; and it shews a sad want of real humility, that they should so soon set up for teachers, and hold up their rash and crude notions against the deliberate judgement of the whole host of the Reformers. Where is there any appearance of that depth of study, or of that earnestness and perseverance *in prayer*, which characterized those holy men, who have left to us, not the crude fancies and notions of their youth, but the results of the matured judgement of their ripest years ? Can we imagine that such men, with all their observation and experience, could have overlooked the objections which occur to persons every way their inferiors, in the very outset of their christian inquiries ? No—they did not overlook them, but they saw through them, and knew that there was nothing in them. *We* are in no danger of setting up human authority too high : but surely there is a respect which is due from the young and inexperienced, to the aged and deeply exercised Christian ;— and especially from the pygmies of this vain-glorious generation to the giants of the

Reformation. O where shall we find anything in our days, which may be compared with the *learning*, the *wisdom*, the *deeply devotional spirit*, of the Fathers and Reformers of our Church ? I should be content to say little of the two former points : but it was the learning and wisdom of men, who (so to speak) lived upon their knees ; and entered fully into the precept “ Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess. v. 17.) And these truly great and holy men, in coming out and separating themselves *from the Church of Rome*, shewed that fairness (in dealing with a Church so foul with corruptions and abominations,) which is too commonly denied to the *Church of England*, even by those who confess that in essentials she is sound. They took the *onus probandi* entirely upon themselves. They shewed themselves willing to carry submission and conformity to the utmost extent that God’s Word would permit : were *glad* when they could in conscience conform and obey : when they could not, they proved that they could not from God’s Word. In short, I see in them, that the *real Christian delights to surrender his own*

will, whenever he may. He does not (like too many of our opponents) evidently rejoice in laying hold of an excuse for disobedience; which is the very spirit of rebellious perverseness and self-will. And, alas ! when I look at some who have lately left the Church, I see too plainly what spirit they are of, by the bitter and captious manner in which they urge, and insist upon, the most frivolous objections, and such as have been a hundred times refuted ! And what follows, when they have left it, but endless schism and separation among themselves ? They stretch in wandering flight the weary wing above the desolate waters ; but they have left the Ark, and they can find no rest.

The Lord of His infinite love and grace, give unto us that meek and humble spirit of ready and glad submission, which is as strongly characteristic of the Martyrs, as their heroic zeal for the Truth, and fervent love to Christ ! Amen.

Before I finally conclude, let me direct your attention to another great excellency of the Church of England, which yet by very many

is counted a defect, and made a matter of complaint ;—it is this, that, according to the principles of our Church, the people have no controul whatever over the Minister, either as respects his appointment, or his ministrations. He is in every respect entirely independent of them. When any one is ordained, either Priest or Deacon, in our Church, there is full opportunity given for any one to mention, ‘ any impediment or notable crime, . . . for which he ought not to be admitted to that Office :’ but this is the only occasion on which individuals of the Congregation are allowed to interfere. Ministers are appointed, presented, and instituted to Livings, in a manner entirely independent of the people. They continue from first to last equally independent. They are to be acknowledged by the people as appointed of Christ, in His Providence over His Church—(which may be either in mercy or in judgement—) and they are responsible to Him, and (under Him) to their Ordinary. Now this, I say, is *the privilege* of the Members of the Church of England. It is the privilege of *the Clergy*—

for it keeps them entirely independent of the people. They are not indebted *to them* for their maintenance, for the Law secures it. They are not indebted *to them* for their appointment, and therefore are not tied and bound by any obligation to them upon that account: but they have (if they have been acting upon right principles throughout) to acknowledge themselves called and appointed of the Lord alone, and therefore responsible *to Him* for the charge which *He* has committed to them. They are not responsible *to them* for their doctrine, their manner of preaching, or their conduct; but to their regular and proper Ecclesiastical Superior, and (through him) to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. And how could they properly discharge the Office of Pastors and Teachers,—or of faithful Ambassadors of Christ, if it were otherwise? It may sometimes happen under other circumstances, and under a different arrangement, that a man entirely devoted to God, and simply relying upon Him, rises above all the circumstances of obligation and dependence which surround him, and realizes those charac-

ters, in spite of all opposition and temptation : but until he does so, he cannot execute his commission, nor discharge his Office aright. And here let us remember, that one of the most eminent men that ever lived since the time of the Reformation,—a man who was indeed a burning and a shining light, and the glory of the transatlantic Churches, in his attempts to do so, and for discharging his own conscience in opposition to the wishes of his Congregation, was dismissed from his charge by his perverse and ungrateful people ; —and (as far as they were concerned) relentlessly consigned, with his whole family, to want and ruin !¹ A Minister of the Church of England cannot be thus treated by his flock : and therefore he is not hampered or fettered, in the discharge of his solemn and momentous duties, by any considerations, whether of fear or favour. And this is no less the privilege of *the people* than of *the Pastor*, if they did

¹ The case of the celebrated President Edwards is, I believe, too well known to need any fuller statement here, than the brief summary given above. See his life, prefixed to a volume of his Sermons, 8vo. London, 1785.

but rightly understand it. It is beyond all question for their soul's health, and their eternal welfare, that their Minister should be entirely independent of them, unaccountable to them ;—and therefore unfettered in the discharge of his duty, and in preaching to them the whole counsel of God. Others may think that it is a very pleasant and comfortable thing, when one faithful Minister is removed, to have the power of selecting for themselves another in his room. But what wise and humble Christian would really wish, upon mature deliberation, *to choose for himself* ? No—it is *the privilege* of the Members of the Church of England that they are not permitted so to do. What then must they do, in case of a bereavement ? It is their special privilege that they have neither right nor power to do anything, but to enter into their closets, and lay their case in earnest, humble prayer, before the Great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls,—the Head over all things to His Church,—Who is exalted to give “ Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body

of Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,"—beseeching Him, in His own good time and way, to send them a Pastor and Teacher, not after their blind choice, but after His own heart. And they know that He has all hearts in His hand, and that to Him is given all power and dominion both in earth and heaven; and He can overrule the most perverse opposers, and the (apparently) most untoward events, for their final comfort, edification, and salvation. So also when it so happens, (as of course it will sometimes happen,) that, as far as concerns pulpit ministrations,

The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, they are not permitted to call their minister to account, or to dictate to him; but, in this case also, they must carry their necessities, and trials, and sorrows to the Lord, and beseech Him to overrule the mind and heart of the minister, so as to make him (in due time) an instrument of edification to their souls. And the Lord is able either to convert

or remove him: or, (in spite of himself,) so to overrule him in the composition and preaching of his discourses, that those who are looking to the Lord in faith for a blessing, shall abundantly receive it. Now it is a great privilege and mercy, that they have nothing to do, but thus to carry matters to the Lord, in a devotional manner and spirit. In so doing they must be brought nearer *to Him*; and their souls must thereby experience benefit. And when at length the blessing comes, which they have thus humbly sought by prayer, how much sweeter and more abundant is it, than if they had obtained it in any other way! And the instances are not few, in which those who have thus waited on the Lord, with a steadfast determination not to leave the Church, though placed apparently under the most trying circumstances, and constrained long to mourn under the greatest discouragements,—have found their prayers most wonderfully and gloriously answered at last. And let it be remembered that when a Christian can do nothing but lay his case before the Lord, and is content to do so, all self-will and

self-reliance are excluded;—which might (if allowed to operate,) sadly mar and frustrate the blessing, even when it seemed in some measure to be secured. You will, I doubt not, my dear Sister, remember some remarkable instances of the prevalence of prayer in such cases, which I related to you on one occasion when we met. Our warrant to pray and to expect an answer, in faith, is very abundant, if only we consider such passages as Matt. iv. 36—38; xviii. 19, 20; xxviii. 20; Luke xviii. 1—8. Eph. iv. 8—13; vi. 18—20. 1 Thess. v. 25. 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2. Heb. xiii. 17, 18. Rev. i. 16, 20; ii. 1; iii. 1. Isa. lix. 1.

And let it be remembered, that this is a point on which our Church more especially teaches us to pray much; for besides the expressions in the Litany, the Prayer for the whole Church Militant, and that for the Clergy and people,—we have two forms of prayer, to be used in the Ember Weeks every day, for those that are to be admitted into Holy Orders,—the Collects for the third Sunday in Advent, and for St. Peter's day,—and the many beautiful Prayers in the Ordina-

tion Services, referring still more expressly and emphatically to this subject ; and from which it might be well for us to borrow largely, both in our private and family devotions in the Ember Weeks, and on all such occasions of change or bereavement, as may occur in our own parishes and neighbourhoods.

And now, my dear Sister, what need I say more ? If we did but enter really and fully into the principles of our Church, and act and *pray* accordingly, — if we were truly and earnestly reaching after that high, and holy, and spiritual standard, which our Church has set before us, what should we need, or what better could we do, for the welfare and salvation of our souls, as individuals ? or for the edification and enlargement of that mighty whole, that mystical body,—that holy, universal, Christian Church, of which we form a part ? Can we hope that those who leave this Church, have ever taken due pains to understand her real principles, or to reduce them to practice ? *If not*, how awful is the guilt of schism which they rashly and wilfully incur ! *If not*, how much reason is there to fear,

that they leave the Church of England because her standard is more pure and high, more truly spiritual and Scriptural, than they desire to attain unto, or have persevering diligence to seek and realize ! Oh ! if all those sincere and zealous persons, who so rashly and unadvisedly have left our Church, had only persevered in humble prayers, and earnest endeavours to fulfil the duties of their station, the duties they owed to their venerable Mother, and their Brethren within her pale, — how much more surely and fully might they have secured every object, which a really wise and earnest Christian could desire ! How much more bright and glorious might have been the state and prospects of our Country at this period, and of the whole Church of Christ within her !—taking that expression in its widest sense, as including all who, under any denomination, profess and call themselves Christians. I tremble to think what pious persons have to answer for, when they leave that Church, whose foundations have been so eminently laid in the blood of her Martyrs, and which has been so peculiarly careful to

maintain the bonds of sweet and holy fellowship with the primitive Churches of Christ, while she entered the fullest and clearest protest against Anti-Christian heresies, superstitions, and idolatries.

I bless the Lord, my dear Sister, that I have been led into this correspondence with you, for I have found it good for my own soul. I bless the Lord for the hope and assurance that it has been made in some measure useful and profitable to you, and has tended to remove any of those difficulties and perplexities which had so long harassed your mind. And how can I better conclude than with one of the prayers of our Church, in which I am sure you will most cordially unite with me, with earnest desires that it may be abundantly answered, in the establishment of those who are wavering and unsettled, and in the return of many to her bosom, who have too long suffered themselves to be ranked among her adversaries.

‘ O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divi-

sions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and Concord, that as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*'

With many earnest prayers that you and yours may be enabled to hold communion in life and death, in time and eternity, with the Fathers, Reformers and Martyrs, and all the faithful members of the Church of England, I remain, my dear Sister,

Yours faithfully and affectionately,
in our common Lord and Saviour,
A. S. THELWALL.

P. S. On looking over the letters which I have received from you, since this long epistle was commenced, I gladly take the opportunity of adding a few remarks to prevent miscon-

struction or misapprehension of what I have written.

And first I would say, my dear Sister, that I desire always to keep in remembrance, that, earnestly and decidedly as I have written in the defence of the Church of England, it is one thing to insist on the fundamental soul-saving Truths of the Gospel, and another to contend about the Form and Government and Discipline of the Visible Church: and sorry should I be, if at any time I *seemed even* to exalt matters of *Ecclesiastical Polity*, above those *great and essential Doctrines* upon which all the Protestant Churches are agreed. When called upon by circumstances to ~~write~~ respecting the former, I write as one fully persuaded in my own mind, and under the impression, that *that* which is really the best form of Ecclesiastical Government and Discipline, will eventually, and on the whole, be found most subservient to the diffusion of soul-saving Truth, and to the edification of immortal souls in the knowledge and love of it; but I trust I never forget that everything which belongs to the *externals* of Religion

should always be considered and maintained in subservience to that which is *inward* and *spiritual*.

And because I have, I trust, always endeavoured, not only to find out and embrace the whole Truth, but also to observe the proper order and dependence of its various parts, I have never been unwilling to hold communion with those who, differing from me as to externals, were yet fully agreed with me as to that which is inward and vital ; nor have I ever found any difficulty in so doing. I can say, from the very bottom of my heart, “ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” (Eph. vi. 24.)—however they may differ from me, and however wrong I may see them to be, in regard to points not absolutely vital and essential. And it always seemed to me that, if I were fully satisfied of the excellence and strength of my position as a member of the Church of England, it would be most unreasonable not to bear with others, who hold a position weaker and more questionable: for this would be nothing better than to *call* myself *strong*, and *act* as

if I were *weak*: for it is written, “We then that are *strong* ought to bear the infirmities of the *weak*, and not to please *ourselves*,” (Rom. xv. 1 :) or, in other words, the stronger we feel ourselves to be, the more forbearance and charity we should shew. And, in the best ages of the Church of England, there have been many and bright examples of those who thus manifested their real strength. The judicious Hooker, the great champion of our Church, may be fitly mentioned as an illustrious instance. O that all who admired *his work*, were indeed partakers of *his spirit*!

And as I trust that no differences upon inferior points will ever oppose any hindrance or difficulty in the way of that spiritual affection, which I ought to feel towards all those, who really love the Name, and in any measure bear the image, of Him “who loved me and gave Himself for me;” so neither will they make me unwilling to rejoice in the plain and faithful preaching of Christ, by those, “who follow not with us.” The great Apostle clearly saw, that some preached Christ “even of envy and strife,—of contention, not sincerely,

supposing to add affliction to his bonds:”—“What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” (Phil. i. 15—18.) So that surely, when Christ is preached by those, whom we consider in any measure sincere and earnest,—though in the midst of much remaining ignorance and error,—we ought unfeignedly to rejoice: and especially when we see that God overrules it for good. And let it not be inferred, from anything that I have said in the preceding letters, that I am unwilling to render due praise to any of the various classes of Dissenters who, according to the light given them, have been preaching Christ in dark and neglected districts of this Country. I think that *the Methodists*,—(the followers both of Whitefield and Wesley) have in various over-populous, and various obscure neighbourhoods, done much good, by preaching the plain truths of the Gospel in a plain way. And, so far as they have acted in consistency with their own professed principles, *they* have done it without any *purpose* or *desire* to injure

the Church. *These* however,—so far as they are true followers of those whose names they bear,—are not properly *Dissenters*; though certainly they are very *irregular* Churchmen. It is a sad apostasy from their original principles, if they be not found firm friends to the Church, whenever she is attacked: and if Wesley and Whitefield should rise from their graves, and behold any of them leagued with her enemies, and conspiring her overthrow, I am sure *they* would express their indignation in stronger language than I should choose to use. But I would not stop with the Methodists: I would say the same of those who are more properly called *Dissenters*, whensover and wheresover they have really and truly preached Christ, and laboured for the conversion and salvation of souls. Very sorry should I be to condemn any whom Christ has accepted and blessed. Whoever they may be, that have real love to Him, and to immortal souls, if they cannot see that they might serve God and their generation much better, by returning to the Church of England, I shall be sorry for *that*; and they must give me leave to think

them greatly mistaken : but let them go forth, with the light they have, into neglected and destitute parts of the land, and “ testify the Gospel of the grace of God ;” and the worst I shall do for them shall be to pray, that God will bless them in using that light, and in due time give them more. Never let us lament or be angry, if only Christ be preached.

But while I would extend the largest charity to the individuals, and trust that I can make all allowances for the prejudices of education, and for the mistakes, rash judgements, and over-hasty proceedings, of those who unhappily see only the worst side of the Church of England, and thereupon take what seems *the shortest and easiest* method of supplying the deficiencies they lament, instead of patiently waiting and searching to find out *the best*,— I cannot, in consistency with my principles, do otherwise than censure and lament the *System* of Dissent: nor can I blind my eyes to many sad and awful evils that are connected with it in practice. I see, in the very principles of Dissent, that which too naturally engenders a spirit of *bitter* opposition to the

Church ; and this naturally leads men to depart farther and farther from that Church ; till, from separation *upon points of Government and Discipline*, they come to separation *upon important Doctrines* : and this the rather, because they have no fixed standard to restrain their wanderings ; they have no clear and full Confession of the Truth as it is in Jesus, to inform us what it is that they maintain, and to bind them to consistency therein. And this very principle of rejecting all Confessions, implies a notion that the Truth is yet undetermined,—not ascertained and clearly defined, but still distant and indistinct: whence there readily arises a conceit, that the further we depart from received opinions, the nearer we shall come to the Truth. Hence it comes to pass, that we can very seldom be warranted to place full confidence in our Dissenting Brethren. If there be a Dissenting Congregation which, with its Minister, is sound and orthodox to-day,—what pledge have I that it will remain so ? The Minister is bound by no Articles or Confession: he is restrained by no ecclesiastical

Superior, to whom he is accountable ; by no connection with any large body which has fixed principles, clearly-defined, and published to the Church and to the World. There is nothing of that kind to prevent him from following his own fancies, and wandering on from one degree and kind of error to another, and gradually leading his flock with him, till both are plunged into the gulf of heresy. It may be said, ‘ Not so—there is *the Bible* to restrain him, which is in the hands of all his people.’ To this I answer—first, can we *reasonably expect* that *this* will be sufficient? —can we reckon upon the members of his Congregation being sufficiently acquainted with *the whole Bible*, to detect his earliest departures from the truth, and his gradual declension into the subtle depths of error? No one who is at all aware of the slow and specious manner in which the most awful heresies have been introduced into the Church, can with any show of reason expect this. And again I answer, that *in fact* it is found *not* to be sufficient. What *might be*, did all professing Christians read and study their Bibles

as they ought, it is not so easy to say : but, taking men, and even Christian men, as we find them, it is not enough ; for the instances are not wanting in which downright Socinianism has been preached in Dissenting Congregations, and by Dissenting Ministers, supposed to be orthodox, long before it was detected by the flock : and at last some unexpected circumstance has taken place to open the eyes of some, and shew them where they were. I speak in reference to facts which I know.

But even if the *present* Minister is sound in the faith, and truly pious and devoted, who shall tell me what *his successor* will be ? What pledge have I, that open Socinianism will not be preached in his pulpit ? It is evident that I have none in *the principles of Dissent* ; but every reason for fearful apprehensions. And here again, if I turn to facts, the instances of *fearful decline*—of a lower and lower standard in each succeeding Minister—are abundant. Alas ! this is not all. The instances of *total apostasy* from all truth and godliness, in places and chapels in which the most eminent of Dissenters, both for learning and piety

have preached ;—but in which *now* nothing but Arianism and Socinianism are proclaimed !—every one who has at all searched into facts must be aware that these are abundant too.

But this is not all. As far as I can ascertain, I do not think that the Dissenters, properly so called, have done much for neglected neighbourhoods ; or for the Christian Instruction of the poor in populous districts, and where Church accommodation was wanting. No doubt there are honourable exceptions. But in too many cases, the aim and labour of the Dissenters has not been, to break up the fallow ground and to sow the good seed in districts where Christ was not named ; but (alas ! that so it should be !) too often where a pious, laborious Clergyman had been sowing the seed, and under his ministrations many were awakened, and began to shew a real concern for their soul's welfare and the cause of true religion ; *then* have the Dissenters become active,—*then* have they exerted themselves to lay hold of these enquirers, to perplex and harass their minds with questions about Government and Discipline, about Conformity and Non-Con-

formity,—when their whole attention *ought* to have been given undivided to the fundamental principles of the Gospel; and working upon them while in that unsettled state of mind, by magnifying the supposed defects of the Church, and giving a fair and flattering representation of the advantages to be found by joining *them*, they have seduced these unwary, and yet unstable Christians, to desert their venerable Mother; under whose Ministrations they had found the life of their souls, and to turn away from her faithful Minister, who “in Christ Jesus had begotten them through the Gospel.” (1 Cor. iv. 15.)

When we know that such things are, and that not unfrequently Dissenting Congregations are in great measure formed, by thus stealing away from their spiritual parents those who are just beginning to give them joy and comfort, it is not very easy to write without such emotion as might easily betray one into bitterness of spirit. But, desiring to write with all calmness, I do not know whether the cruelty of such conduct towards a faithful Clergyman, or towards those who are awakened

and enlightened under his Ministrations, ought to be considered as the greatest. Perhaps *the pain* inflicted on the faithful Pastor is the greatest ; but the individuals thus led astray sustain the deepest *injury*. For where are they likely to find such nourishment and edification for their souls, as there where the Lord had first given the blessing?—in the ordinances, and by the instruments, through whom He had first communicated spiritual life? And not only is this point well worthy of deep consideration, but yet further;—What can be more likely to hinder the good work, and to prevent such persons from ever becoming well-informed, sober-minded, and truly consistent Christians, than the distractions and temptations that arise from having their minds, in the very outset of their spiritual race, thus turned aside from the main truths of the Gospel, to be involved in disputations and controversy about external forms, and all those *minor* points, whereon alone the truly Orthodox Dissenters differ from the Church of England? And what again is likely to be the effect upon their Christian spirit, when they are thus early

instructed to cavil and find fault, to search out and magnify every imagined imperfection in a Church, in whose ordinances Confessors and Martyrs have found precious edification from day to day, till they were ripe for glory ?

The means of instruction provided by the Church of England are, in many districts, so inadequate to the wants of a population, which in some places has increased ten and twenty-fold since the time of the Reformation, that there is abundant room for the labours of all who desire to preach Christ, without at all interfering with one another. When the Dissenters go forth into such neighbourhoods to supply our lack of service, none of the previous remarks will, of course, at all apply to them. But when, leaving such neighbourhoods in their ignorance and destitution, they choose rather to "enter into other men's labours," and boast in another man's line of things made ready to their hand ; (John iv. 38, and 2 Cor. x. 13—16.) and to rob faithful Clergymen of the children whom God hath given them in the Gospel, then I must plainly say, that they are doing the work of

Satan, rather than of that Master whom they profess to serve. Most of all when amidst all their professed zeal for the Truth, they preach after all an unsound, mutilated, and spurious Gospel, whereby the glory of the ever-blessed Trinity is concealed and darkened, if not actually questioned or denied. Of this, there are many instances to be found. The doctrines which relate more immediately to the personal salvation of the sinner, (such, I mean, as Articles IX—XVII of our Church) *seem* perhaps to be pretty fairly and fully stated; but the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Person of Christ, and of the Personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost, (which are the very foundation of everything, and without which the whole plan of Salvation would be a mere building upon sand) these are either most loosely and vaguely stated, or else explained away; and Sabellianism, or the subtler forms of Arianism, are substituted for the Truth of Scripture, and the Orthodox doctrine of the Church of Christ.

It is impossible to say how far these evils actually prevail among the Dissenters, who

are commonly counted Orthodox, and supposed to preach the Gospel. That they do *widely* prevail, is a fact well known to all who have had opportunities of observation. And as the whole body of the Dissenters utterly refuse any Test, by which we might be enabled to distinguish between those who are sound and those who are not, they have little right or reason to complain, if such discoveries only here and there should make us very suspicious of the whole body;—especially when they stand before the world, as closely linked together in that awful alliance with professed Socinians, which is the disgrace and scandal of the three Denominations.

I had no intention, my dear Sister, of entering at all upon this mournful subject; but I was led into it by the remarks in your last. When we see such evils abounding and prevailing,—and when we see so many, who alike profess to be children of God and brethren in Christ, so ready to bite and devour one another, instead of “bearing one another’s burdens,” and endeavouring to help and encourage one another in every good word and

work, one is certainly tempted to say with Jeremiah, “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears! O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!” (Jer. ix. 1, 2.) But, in the midst of all that we see to lament and bewail, it is our privilege to know that, notwithstanding all the evils and confusion of which the earth is full, and notwithstanding all the imperfections and corruptions which deform the visible Church, our heavenly Father carries on, serene and undisturbed, with a calm and stately progress, His own eternal purposes of love and mercy. Though we *hear* no earthly sound but the din of strife and contention, and the moanings of lamentation and anguish; and though we see the gathering storm, and hear the distant thunders roll, to give us fearful note that “the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;” (Isa. xxvi. 21,) even in the midst of all this, the children of God, the faithful disciples of Christ, can *hear* with spiritual ears, a “still small voice,” which whispers peace

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and consolation ;—which says, “ Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me : And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” (Luke xii. 32. John x. 27—30.) These precious words assure them of the everlasting security, not only of their own souls, but of all the elect of God,—their brethren in the faith, and hope, and love of the Gospel. And they whose eyes are spiritually enlightened, can even *see* how, by the Ministry of His Word and Spirit, God still goes on to gather together His chosen, and to bring them into vital union with Christ, and with one another in Him ; and makes all things subservient to their eternal joy and salvation. Such things the ear of faith can hear, and the eye of faith can see, amid all the misery and confusion here below. And what more shall I say ? For the

Scriptures teach us to look forward to brighter and more glorious scenes beyond. Even here on earth a blessed period is approaching, when “they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. ii. 4: and xi. 6—9.) *Then* may we expect, *and not till then*, a perfect Church upon earth; of which not only the principles will be sound, but the administration in full accordance therewith: not only every help will be provided for edification and devo-

tion, but all these helps, by all will be faithfully and diligently improved ; and every one's walk and conversation will correspond with the privileges he enjoys. *Till then*, let us not expect too much from the human administration, even of that which is most excellent ; neither let us throw difficulties and hindrances in the way of that good which *is* attainable, by insisting upon that which manifestly *is not so*. We cannot have a Millennial Church till the Millennium itself shall have dawned. But we may look forward to it with humble and assured hope : and we may stand amid the dead and dying,—we may stand by the graves of those that are departed, and hear our Church directing our faith and hope to that glorious and blessed period, ‘when we with all that are departed in the true faith of God’s holy Name, shall have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

In the mean time, let us rejoice and thank God for the abundant means and opportunities of spiritual worship, and Scriptural instruc-

tion which our Church has provided for us ; and that we may duly improve these, let us pray—

‘ We meekly beseech Thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness ; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Christ ; and that, at the general Resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in Thy sight ; and receive that blessing, which Thy well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all that love and fear Thee, saying, Come ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world : Grant this, we beseech Thee, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*’

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*’

THE FORM AND MANNER OF ORDERING OF PRIESTS.

[As this Service is particularly alluded to in the preceding pages, and it is to be found in few of the Prayer-Books which are in common use, (with the exception of those lately published by the Prayer-Book and Homily Society,) it seems desirable to call to it the particular attention of the reader, by inserting it here: which also gives opportunity to annex a few remarks.

The Exhortation addressed by the Bishop to the Candidates for Ordination, and the Vows and Promises made by each individual, in the course of this solemn and most beautiful Service, have reference to the *daily* duties of the Ministerial Office. Is it not, therefore, greatly to be desired, that every Priest of the Church of England should be in the habit of referring from time to time to this Service? and that *at least once in the year*, (—as on the *Anniversary of his Ordination*,) he should read through the whole of it, with fervent prayer and earnest self-examination? Oh, what an occasion would there be for thankfulness to Him, “from whom all good things do come,” and “from whom all holy desires, all good counsels,

and all just works do proceed," to find that in any respect or measure, he had been made faithful!—for deep humiliation, unfeigned contrition, prayer for mercy, and holy resolutions for the future, whereinsoever he should find himself deficient!

But it is not only desirable that *the Ministers* of the Church of England should frequently review their Ordination Vows and Engagements: it is highly important that all *the Members* of that Church should also be fully aware of the nature of those Engagements. They will, it may be hoped, be less likely to blame those who are really zealous in the discharge of their duties, or to throw hindrances and difficulties in their way: they will be more ready to submit to their godly admonitions, and more disposed to help them with their humble and earnest prayers.

And seeing that it is a work of so great difficulty in which Clergymen are engaged, and in which all the manifold temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, will conspire to hinder them, and make them slack and negligent,—is it not desirable that every motive should be in operation, which may tend to stir them up to increasing earnestness and diligence? Among which *this* may be one, that occasionally may exert a salutary influence,—the consideration that every individual committed to their care is well acquainted with the Vows that are upon them, and therefore able to discern, whether or not their conduct is really consistent therewith. It is well for

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Christian Ministers to know that many eyes are upon them; especially when it is also known, that those, who are sure enough to be observant, have in their hands the Standard by which they will be best enabled to judge fairly,—that is to say, the Standard contained in the Service with which they were ordained.]

¶ When the day appointed by the Bishop is come, after Morning Prayer is ended, there shall be a Sermon, or Exhortation, declaring the Duty and Office of such as come to be admitted Priests; how necessary that Order is in the Church of Christ: and also how the People ought to esteem them in their Office.

¶ First, the Archdeacon, or in his absence one appointed in his stead, shall present unto the Bishop, sitting in his Chair near to the holy Table, all them that shall receive the Order of Priesthood that day (each of them being decently habited), and say,

Reverend Father in God, I present unto you these persons present, to be admitted to the Order of Priesthood.

¶ *The Bishop.*

Take heed that the persons, whom ye present unto us, be apt and meet, for their learning and godly conversation, to exercise their Ministry duly, to the honour of God, and the edifying of His Church.

¶ *The Archdeacon shall answer,*

I have enquired of them, and also examined them, and think them so to be.

¶ *Then the Bishop shall say unto the People,*

Good people, these are they whom we purpose, God willing, to receive this day unto the holy Office of Priesthood: For after due examination, we find not to the contrary, but that they be lawfully called to their Function and Ministry, and that they be persons meet for the same. But yet if there be any of you who knoweth any Impediment, or notable Crime in any of them, for the which he ought not to be received into this holy Ministry, let him come forth in the Name of God, and shew what the Crime or Impediment is.¹

¹ All those members of the Church of England, who are really desirous that her Ministers should be such as this Service would lead us to expect, and shews us that they ought to be, should be fully aware that this opportunity is given to object "any notable Crime or Impediment," which might bring a reproach upon the Sacred Office of the Priesthood, or prove the individual unfit to administer it:—always remembering, however, that it is not the greatest sins which are truly repented of and forsaken, but those which there is reason to fear are still persisted in, or unrepented, which can be properly urged on this occasion. It is with reference to this occasion, and with the same view to the honour of the Ministry, that Candidates for Orders are bound to give public

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¶ And if any great Crime or Impediment be objected, the Bishop shall surcease from Ordering that Person, until such time as the Party accused shall be found clear of that Crime.

¶ Then the Bishop (commending such as shall be found meet to be Ordered, to the Prayers of the Congregation) shall, with the Clergy and People present, sing or say the Litany, with the Prayers, as is before appointed in the Form of Ordering Deacons: save only, that in the proper Suffrage there added, the word *[Deacons]* shall be omitted, and the word *[Priests]* inserted instead of it.

¶ Then shall be sung or said the Service for the Communion; with the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, as followeth.

The Collect.

Almighty God, giver of all good things, who by Thy Holy Spirit hast appointed divers Orders of Ministers in the Church; Mercifully behold these thy servants now called to the Office of Priesthood; and replenish them so with the truth of thy doctrine, and adorn them with innocency of life, that both by word and good example they may faithfully serve Thee in this Office, to the glory of Thy Name, and the edification of Thy Church, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, world without end. *Amen.*

notice of their intention to offer themselves as such to the Bishop, in the Church or Congregation which they attend, by reading the paper commonly called a *Si quis*.

The Epistle.¹ Ephes. iv. 7.

Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it, but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth ? He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

¹ The Epistle, and the Gospel which immediately follows, alike direct our attention to Christ, as the Great Head of the Church, from whom we are to seek Pastors and Teachers after His own heart, for the edification of His Church and people, by humble and earnest prayer. The Lord says, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest," and therefore, if such are not sent forth to provide for the necessities of the Church, it may be truly said, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James iv. 2.)

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¶ After this, shall be read for the Gospel, part of the Ninth Chapter of St. Matthew, as followeth :

St. Matthew ix. 36.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.

¶ Or else this that followeth, out of the Tenth Chapter of St. John.

St. John x. 1.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice ; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him ; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him ; for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them, but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them.

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

¶ Then the Bishop, sitting in his chair, shall minister unto every one of them the Oath concerning the King's Supremacy, as it is before set forth in the Form for the Ordering of Deacons.

¶ And that done, he shall say unto them as hereafter followeth:

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Have always therefore printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For *they are the sheep of Christ, which He bought with His death, and for whom He shed His blood. The Church and Congregation whom you must serve, is His Spouse, and His Body.* And if it shall happen, the

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same Church, or any Member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Wherefore consider with yourselves the end of your Ministry *towards the Children of God, towards the Spouse, and Body of Christ*; and see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, *until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in Religion, or for viciousness in Life.*

Forasmuch then as your Office is both of so great excellency, and of so great difficulty, ye see with how great care and study ye ought to apply yourselves, as well that ye may shew yourselves dutiful and thankful unto that Lord, who hath placed you in so high a Dignity; as also to beware, that neither you yourselves offend, nor be occasion that others offend. ¹ *Howbeit ye cannot have a mind and will thereto of yourselves; for that will and ability is given*

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of God alone: Therefore ye ought, and have need, to pray earnestly for his Holy Spirit. And seeing that you cannot by any other means compass the doing of so weighty a work, pertaining to the salvation of man, but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the holy Scriptures, and with a life agreeable to the same; consider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures, and in framing the manners both of yourselves, and of them that specially pertain unto you, according to the rule of the same Scriptures: and for this self-same cause, how ye ought to forsake and set aside (as much as you may) all worldly cares and studies.

We have good hope that you have well weighed and pondered these things with yourselves long before this time; and that *you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to give yourselves wholly to this office, whereunto it hath pleased God to call you: so that, as much as lieth in you, you will apply yourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all your cares and studies this way; and that you will continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost; that by daily reading and weighing of the scriptures, ye may wax riper and stronger in your Ministry; and that ye may so endeavour yourselves from time to time to sanctify the lives of you and yours, and to fashion them after the Rule and Doctrine of Christ, that ye may be wholesome*

and godly examples, and patterns for the people to follow.

And now that this present Congregation of Christ, here assembled, may also understand your minds and wills in these things, and that this your promise may the more move you to do your duties: ye shall answer plainly to these things, which we in the name of God, and of His Church, shall demand of you touching the same.

Do you think in your heart, that you be truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Order of this United Church of England and Ireland, to the Order and Ministry of Priesthood?

1 "In the Name of God and of His Church," these questions are proposed to each individual: and oh, let it be remembered, that in the face of God and of His Church are the answers given; so that each answer has the nature of a Vow and Promise of the most solemn kind. And how awful to think that every Clergyman who neglects and disregards them, must thereby bring the guilt of wilful and corrupt perjury upon his soul! It is not possible to conceive a person standing under a more awful responsibility, or a more tremendous condemnation, than an indolent, careless, unfaithful, and worldly Clergyman of the Church of England! A perusal of this Service, and especially of the Exhortation which precedes, and of these solemn questions and answers, is enough to make the most earnest and diligent to tremble, and cast themselves humbly at the foot of the Cross, looking unto Jesus for mercy and for help.

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Answer. I think it.

The Bishop.

Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? And are you determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?

Answer. I am so persuaded, and have so determined by God's grace.

The Bishop.

Will you then give your faithful diligence, always so to minister the *Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ*, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same, according to the Commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your cure and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same?

Answer. I will so do, by the help of the Lord.

The Bishop.

Will you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word; and to use both public

and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your Cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given ?¹

Answer. I will, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop.

² *Will you be diligent in Prayers, and in reading*

¹ How sad ! yea, how strange ! that, when *this* is especially one of our Ordination Vows, and what Clergymen therefore are most solemnly engaged to do, so few should really apply themselves to this work ! and not only so, but that those who do attempt it in some imperfect manner, should be continually regarded and treated by their Brethren as troublers of Israel and disturbers of the peace of the Church ! How does this solemn engagement agree with the conduct and principles of those who maintain, that Controversy is to be avoided,—that we must let error and heresy alone, in the hope that it will die of itself and be forgotten ? Here the Ministers of the Church of England promise, not with *neglect and indolence* to leave “erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word,” to fade and die of themselves ; but to be ready, *with all faithful diligence, to drive them away.* What is the charge, then, which must be brought against those who will not, according to their abilities and opportunities, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, to attack and put down error ?

² Here we are reminded what a Clergyman should be *in his closet* and *in his study.* And the whole of this Service very clearly proves that he who is not much *in both*, can never

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of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh ?

Answer. I will endeavour myself so to do, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop.

Will you be diligent to frame and fashion *your own selves, and your families*, according to the Doctrine of Christ ; and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ ?

Answer. I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop.

Will you maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people, and especially among them that are or shall be committed to your charge ?

Answer. I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop.

Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and

approve himself to God and man, as a faithful Minister of the Church of England. O what manner of persons ought those to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, who have publicly and solemnly taken upon themselves such vows and engagements ! (See 2 Peter iii. 11—14.)

other Chief Ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you ; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgements ?

Answer. I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

¶ Then shall the Bishop, standing up, say,

Almighty God, who hath given you this will to do all these things : grant also unto you strength and power to perform the same ; that He may accomplish His work, which He hath begun in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ ¹ After this the Congregation shall be desired, secretly in their Prayers, to make their humble supplications to

¹ This rubric is, I fear, but little regarded in practice :—but, perhaps as much as anything contained in the whole Service, it stamps the *devotional* character of the whole, and shews the real spirit of the Fathers of our Church ; and thus, by plain inference, what all their children and disciples ought to be ! Even all the solemn prayers which are contained in this part of our Liturgy, are not considered as enough : but the Congregation must be desired secretly, each individual for himself, to pour out his heart in prayer, that ministerial gifts and qualifications may be poured upon those who are to be ordained. For “groanings that cannot be uttered,” (Rom. viii. 26) in reference to a matter so important, a space is to be left in the midst of this solemn service !

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God for all these things : for the which Prayers, there shall be silence kept for a space.

¶ After which shall be sung or said by the Bishop (the Persons to be Ordained Priests, all kneeling,) *Veni, Creator, Spiritus*; the Bishop beginning, and the Priests and others that are present answering by verses, as followeth :

*Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.
Thy blessed Unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.
Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace.
Keep far our foes, give peace at home:
Where Thou art guide, no ill can come.
Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of both, to be but one ;
That through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song ;
Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

¶ Or this,

*Come, Holy Ghost, eternal God,
Proceeding from above,*

Both from the Father, and the Son,

The God of peace and love;

Visit our minds, into our hearts

Thy heav'ly grace inspire;

That truth and godliness we may

Pursue with full desire.

Thou art the very Comforter

In grief and all distress:

The heavenly gift of God most high,

No tongue can it express.

The fountain and the living spring

Of joy celestial:

The fire so bright, the love so sweet,

The Unction spiritual.

Thou in Thy gifts art manifold:

By them Christ's church doth stand:

In faithful hearts thou writ'st thy law,

The finger of God's hand.

According to Thy promise, Lord,

Thou givest speech with grace;

That through Thy help God's praises may

Resound in every place.

O Holy Ghost, into our minds

Send down Thy heav'ly light:

Kindle our hearts with fervent zeal,

To serve God day and night.

Our weakness strengthen and confirm,

(For, Lord, Thou know'st us frail),

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*That neither devil, world, nor flesh,
Against us may prevail.*
Put back our en'mies far from us,
And help us to obtain
Peace in our hearts with God and man,
(The best, the truest gain);
And grant that Thou being, O Lord,
Our leader and our guide,
We may escape the snares of sin,
And never from Thee slide.
Such measures of Thy powerful grace
Grant, Lord, to us, we pray;
That Thou may'st be our Comforter
At the last dreadful day.
Of strife and of dissension
Dissolve, O Lord, the bands,
And knit the knots of peace and love
Throughout all Christian lands.
Grant us the grace that we may know
The Father of all might,
That we of His beloved Son
May gain the blissful sight;
And that we may with perfect faith
Ever acknowledge Thee,
The Spirit of Father, and of Son,
One God in Persons three.
To God the Father laud and praise,
And to His blessed Son,

*And to the Holy Spirit of grace,
Co-equal three in one.*

And pray we that our only Lord
Would please His Spirit to send
*On all that shall profess His Name,
From hence to the world's end. Amen.*

¶ That done, the Bishop shall pray in this wise, and say,
Let us pray.

Almighty God, and heavenly Father, who, of Thine infinite love and goodness towards us, hast given to us Thy only and most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer, and the Author of everlasting life; who, after He had made perfect our redemption by His death, and was ascended into heaven, sent abroad into the world His Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Doctors, and Pastors, by whose labour and ministry He gathered together a great flock in all the parts of the world, to set forth the eternal praise of Thy holy Name: for these so great benefits of Thy eternal goodness, and for that Thou hast vouchsafed to call these Thy servants, here present, to the same office and Ministry appointed for the salvation of mankind, we render unto Thee most hearty thanks; we praise and worship Thee; and we humbly beseech Thee, by the same Thy blessed Son, to grant unto all, which either here or elsewhere call upon Thy holy Name, that we may continue to show ourselves thankful unto Thee for these and all other

Thy benefits; and that we may daily increase and go forwards in the knowledge and faith of Thee and Thy Son, by the Holy Spirit. So that, as well by these Thy Ministers, as by them over whom they shall be appointed Thy Ministers, Thy holy Name may be for ever glorified, and Thy blessed kingdom enlarged, through the same Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, world without end. *Amen.*

¶ When this Prayer is done, the Bishop, with the Priests present, shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the Order of Priesthood; the Receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the Bishop saying,

¹ Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a

¹ As we are before taught that the “will and ability to discharge this important office is given of God alone,” and that “therefore we ought and have need to pray earnestly for His Holy Spirit,” so here (in perfect conformity with all that has gone before) we are reminded that “for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God” it is necessary to “receive the Holy Ghost;” respecting whose gifts and operations we have a remarkable passage in the Homily for Whitsunday, which may serve to illustrate this expression.

“The Holy Ghost doth always declare Himself by His fruitful and gracious gifts; namely, *by the word of wisdom; by the word of knowledge, which is the understanding of the scriptures; by faith; in doing of miracles; by healing them*

Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou

that are diseased ; *by prophecy, which is the declaration of God's mysteries* ; by discerning of spirits ; diversities of tongues ; interpretation of tongues ; and so forth. All which gifts, as they proceed from one Spirit, and are severally given to man, according to the measurable distribution of the Holy Ghost ; even so do they bring men, and not without good reason, into a wonderful admiration of God's divine power.

“Who will not marvel at that which is written in the Acts of the Apostles, to hear their bold confession before the council at Jerusalem ; and to consider that they went away with joy and gladness, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer rebukes and checks for the Name and faith of Christ Jesus ?* This was the mighty work of the Holy Ghost ; who, because He giveth patience and joyfulness of heart in temptation and affliction, hath therefore worthily obtained this Name in Holy Scripture, to be called a Comforter.

“Who will not also marvel to read the learned and heavenly sermons of St. Peter and the other disciples ; considering that they were never brought up in school of learning, but called even from their nets, to supply the rooms of Apostles ? This was likewise the mighty work of the Holy Ghost ; who, because He doth instruct the hearts of the simple in the true knowledge of God and His holy word, is most justly termed by this name and title, to be the Spirit of Truth. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, telleth a strange story

dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful Dispenser of the Word of God, and of His holy

of a certain learned and subtle Philosopher; who, being an extreme adversary to Christ and His doctrine, could by no kind of learning be converted to the faith, but was able to withstand all the arguments, that could be brought against him, with little or no labour; at length there started up a poor simple man, of small wit and less knowledge, one that was reputed among the learned as an idiot, and he, in God's Name, would need take in hand to dispute with this proud Philosopher. The Bishops and other learned men, standing by, were marvellously abashed at the matter, thinking that by his doings they should all be confounded, and put to open shame. He notwithstanding goeth on; and, beginning in the Name of the Lord Jesus, brought the Philosopher to such point in the end, contrary to all men's expectation, that he could not choose but acknowledge the power of God in his words, and to give place to the truth. *Was not this a miraculous work, that one silly soul, of no learning, should do that which many Bishops of great knowledge and understanding were never able to bring to pass?* So true is the saying of Bede: *Where the Holy Ghost doth instruct and teach, there is no delay at all in learning.*"

The latter part of this passage shews what were the views maintained by the Fathers and Reformers of our Church, as to the mighty and "miraculous" working of the Holy Ghost, in ages long after the Apostolic: whereby we also understand what they looked for in their own days, and would have us to expect in ours:—not indeed as setting aside the necessity

Sacraments ; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

¶ Then the Bishop shall deliver to every one of them kneeling, the Bible into his hand, saying,

Take thou Authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments in the Congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.

¶ When this is done, the Nicene Creed shall be sung or said ; and the Bishop shall after that go on in the Service of the Communion,¹ *which all they that receive Orders shall take together*, and remain in the same place where hands were laid upon them, until such time as they have received the Communion.

of human learning and study, but as teaching and imparting that, to which no human learning or study can attain. Such teaching the Ministers of the Church of England should look for, when they are ordained to their office, and when they are engaged in the discharge of it.

¹ Very suitably and beautifully is it appointed, that all they who receive Orders should take the sacrament together, that they may be thereby reminded of the holy bonds by which they are bound together as Brethren in the family of God, and "very members incorporate in the mystical body of Christ;" and that "feeding upon Christ in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving," they may be strengthened and refreshed for the work to which they are called.

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¶ The Communion being done, after the last Collect, and immediately before the Benediction, shall be said these Collects :

Most Merciful Father, we beseech Thee to send upon these Thy servants thy heavenly blessing ; *that they may be clothed with righteousness, and that Thy Word spoken by their mouths may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain.* Grant also, that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall deliver out of Thy most holy Word, or agreeable to the same, as the means of our salvation ; that in all our words and deeds we may seek Thy glory, and the increase of Thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help ; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name, and finally by Thy mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*

[The exceptions taken against this portion of our Liturgy may fitly serve to illustrate what I have elsewhere observed, that the cavils and objections raised against our Liturgy, arise principally out of its peculiar excellences. One of those portions which I have noticed with peculiar admiration, is the part more especially objected to: that is to say, the particular words used in the act of Ordination: “Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Priest in the Church of God.”

Here then arise two questions: first, Do we need peculiar gifts and qualifications, wrought in us and conferred upon us, by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, to enable us rightly to discharge this office, to ‘the promoting of God’s glory, and the edifying of His people?’ If any one denies this, it is vain for me to argue with him further: we have no common ground to stand upon. But I am sure that no real Christian will deny this. For we read in the Old Testament, of those who were called to the work of the tabernacle, that God had filled them “with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,” (Exodus xxxi. 2—11, and xxxv. 30—35) which surely must be understood as implying, that no one could be qualified for any work in the Church of God, except by the special influence of the Holy Ghost. Are we to suppose the work of the Christian Ministry less arduous, or less spiritual,

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than the framing of the Tabernacle, which was but a type and shadow of the Church of Christ?

But all this being granted, the second question,—and the question really at issue,—will be, Whether there is any warrant to expect that those gifts and qualifications will be bestowed in Ordination? This would bring us immediately to the question, whether our Ordination be indeed Apostolic and legitimate. We are fully persuaded that it is; and therefore let us see what is written in the Scriptures, with reference to legitimate and Apostolic Ordination. First, I find that *imposition of hands* is the Scriptural method of setting men apart to any Ministerial Office. (Acts vi. 6, and xiii. 3.) Next, that St. Paul, writing to Timothy, says in one place, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery:*” and in another: “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, *which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*” (1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6.) So that the gift which Timothy, as a Minister of the Gospel, was called upon to stir up and exercise, is here expressly connected with the laying on of hands in his Ordination. Following therefore, as we are fully persuaded that we do, the Scriptural method of Ordination, we expect, on Scriptural grounds, the same blessing in it which the Scriptures connect with it, upon all who come in simple faith expecting it. And here, as in all other

cases, we expect that to all “such as by faith and rightly do receive” the same, the Ordinances will “be effectual, because of Christ’s institution and promise:”—whatsoever exceptions may be taken (justly or unjustly) against those who minister them. (Art. xxvi.) Our method of Ordination, and the expectation connected with it, are founded upon Scripture, and the practice regularly handed down, generation after generation, from the times of the Apostles to the present day. What more could be desired?

Another exception is taken against the words, “whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.” And what are we come to now? Here is an objection against the words of Scripture itself! for these very words were addressed by our blessed Lord Himself to those whom He commissioned to teach and preach the Gospel, (John xx. 21—23.) And I need only say, that as the words have (beyond all doubt or question) a sound and important meaning in the place wherein they occur in Holy Scripture, let us only understand them in that sound and important sense *here*, and then all ground of objection will altogether vanish. Let us not cavil against God’s own word.

The power of the keys, as it is called, (with reference to Matt. xvi. 19) is understood by all true Protestants to be a power which is continued in the Church from

age to age, and more especially to belong to faithful Pastors, who have not only *permission* to use the words of peace and consolation, but also *power* and *authority* to preach the Gospel, to exercise the Discipline of the Church, and to *declare* and pronounce to the penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins, not as mere private Christians, but as faithful Ambassadors from the King of kings, lawfully and Scripturally called, commissioned, and qualified for the discharge of their office. And doubtless the consolation of the humble and penitent depends much (under God) upon the Ministers of the Gospel having and exercising that authority which belongs to their office. That is to say, upon our coming to them, not as mere neighbours to tell them a piece of news which we have picked up as it were by chance, but as God's Messengers, duly commissioned to preach to them in His Name.

I might illustrate from the Heidelberg Catechism, and from the Ordination Service of the Dutch Church, the views maintained by other Reformed Churches respecting the Office of the Ministry, and the Power of the Keys. And from the history of the Saints, who have had deep experience of the temptations and siftings of Satan, I might shew that it is sometimes important, and even necessary, to the consolation of the tried and tempted soul, to exercise that peculiar authority in declaring and pronouncing to the individual the forgiveness of his sins, which is

in certain cases permitted by our Office for the Visitation of the Sick ; and there are cases in which nothing short of this will avail.

Accordingly we find it related of some of the Martyrs, that they mutually exercised this authority in pronouncing to one another, with full assurance, their pardon and acceptance. See the correspondence between Bradford and Careless in John Fox. And the learned Author of "*The Suppressed Evidence*," has extracted a curious account of a Mr. John Scrimgeour, from Howie's "*Biographia Scotiana*," Edinburgh, 1812; who, having a godly woman under his charge at Kinghorn in Fife, who was in a most deplorable state of mental anguish, had tried all ordinary means to comfort her, but in vain : her dreadful apprehensions and terrors still continued, till at length having visited her, with two of his elders, he endeavoured first to comfort her, then to pray with her ; but she still grew worse : till at length, "sitting pensive for awhile, he thus broke silence : 'What is this ! Our laying grounds of comfort before her will not do. Prayer will not do. We must try another remedy. Sure I am, this is a daughter of Abraham ; sure I am, she hath sent for me ; and therefore in the Name of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, who sent Him to redeem sinners ; in the Name of Jesus Christ, who obeyed the Father, and came to save us, and in the Name of the Holy and blessed Spirit, our Quickener and Sanctifier,—I the Elder, command thee, a daughter of Abraham,

to be loosed from these bonds.' And immediately peace and joy ensued."

Let this be compared with the form of Absolution in our Office for the Visitation of the Sick ; and, though the words are not by any means borrowed, it will be evident that the authority exercised is just the same ; that is to say the authority of a faithful Ambassador of the Lord, who knew when and how to speak in his Master's Name, in private as well as in public. The occasions which call for its exercise may be rare : but the power and authority remains in the Church, and belongs to her faithful Pastors.]

[In conclusion I would observe, that from this Service we may learn what Ministers of the Church of England ought to be ; how diligent in Prayers, and in reading the Holy Scriptures ; how careful to frame and fashion themselves and their families according to the Doctrine of Christ ; how faithful, earnest, and zealous in instructing their people out of the Scriptures, in ministering the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ, in using both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as the whole. Can any one desire that a higher, more heavenly, or more Scriptural standard should be set before us, than that which is proposed in the whole of this Service ?

But some one will say, "This standard is not realized in practice. The Clergy too commonly are

totally different from what this Service would lead us to expect. If they were such as this Service shews that they ought to be, I should never think of leaving the Church: but as it is, I deem it high time to withdraw from such a mass of practical corruption."

Stop a little. The Jewish Church, at various periods of its history, and especially in the time of our Saviour, was practically much more corrupt than the Church of England either is, or ever was. Did the Prophets therefore, or did our Lord Himself, teach the faithful and godly remnant among the people to withdraw from that Church, and set up a form of worship for themselves? (See Matt. xxiii. 1—3.) We find the Apostles and first Christians worshipping in the Temple at the regular hours of Prayer, as long as the rage of Persecution permitted. They did not withdraw from the Church, but waited till they were actually driven out of it.

But, supposing that your view of the present state of our Church were correct, and offering no apology for such Clergymen as give just occasion to your complaint, let it be considered very seriously—How far *you yourself* are in fault in this matter? In regard to which question it may be fairly asked:

1. Is *your* conduct such as to help and encourage the Clergy to the diligent and faithful discharge of their difficult and solemn duties? or is it such as to throw serious hindrances and discouragements in

their way? If you are always more ready to find out *their* faults than to confess *your own*: if you are ready, on every occasion of offence, to leave the Church, or have already left it; instead of seeking to be yourself a faithful and exemplary member of the Church, whatever others may be: are you not taking the surest way to perpetuate, to irritate, and to aggravate the evil of which you complain, and by abetting or multiplying schism and division, to throw the greatest impediments in the way of real amendment?

2. If the Clergy are not what they should be, How much and how often have *you* *prayed* that God would make them such? "That will and ability is given of God alone:"—and if *you* have not diligently, earnestly, and perseveringly sought, from the Author and source of every good and every perfect gift, the abundant out-pouring of Spiritual gifts and qualifications upon the Clergy,—*you* at least have no right or reason to complain that they are wanting: still less to leave the Church on that pretence.]

FORM, USED IN THE DUTCH REFORMED
CHURCH, FOR THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM
TO INFANTS OF BELIEVERS.

THE doctrine of Baptism consisteth of these three points: *First*, That *we, with our children, are conceived and born in sin*, and are thereby children of wrath, insomuch that *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, except we be born again*. This is signified unto us by the immersion and sprinkling with water; whereby the uncleanness of our souls is set forth unto us; and we are admonished to loathe ourselves before God, and to seek our cleansing and salvation out of ourselves.

Secondly, Baptism doth signify and seal unto us *the washing away of our sins* through Jesus Christ; therefore are we baptized in the *Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. For when we are baptized in the *Name of the Father*, God the *Father* doth witness and seal unto us, that He hath entered into an everlasting Covenant of Grace with us, that He hath adopted us to be his Children and Heirs, and will provide for us all manner of good, and remove from us all evil, or turn it to our good.

When we are baptized in the *Name* of the *Son*, the Lord Jesus Christ doth seal unto us, that He washeth us in His Blood from all our Sins, incorporating us into the Fellowship of His Death and Resurrection, so that we are freed from all our Sins, and accounted just before God.

In like manner, when we are baptized in the *Name* of the *Holy Ghost*, the holy Spirit of God doth assure us by this holy Sacrament, that He will dwell with us, and sanctify us to be Members of Christ, applying unto us what we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, the daily renewing of our souls, till we be presented at last among the congregation of the Elect, without spot, to partake of everlasting life.

Thirdly, Whereas in all Covenants there are contained two parts; therefore are we by God through Baptism admonished of, and obliged unto, new Obedience; namely, that we cleave to this One God, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the World, crucify our old Nature, and walk in a new and godly life.

And if through weakness sometimes we fall into Sin, we must not despair of God's mercy, nor continue in Sin, considering that Baptism is a sign and undoubted witness that we have an everlasting Covenant of Grace with God.

And although our young Children understand not these things, yet may they not therefore be excluded from Baptism; for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation through Adam, so are they again received to mercy in Christ; as God speaks to Abraham, the Father of all the faithful, and consequently to us, and our children, Gen. xvii. 7. saying: "I will establish my Covenant between Me and thee, and thy Seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This also the Apostle Peter testifieth, Acts ii. 39. in these words; "For the Promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Hence it is, that God hath of old commanded that infants should be circumcised: which Circumcision was a seal of this Covenant, and of the Righteousness of Faith; therefore also Christ received the little children, "put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Mark x. 16. Since then Baptism is put in the place of Circumcision, therefore infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God, and of the Covenant: and parents are bound further to instruct their children in these things, as they grow up.

That therefore this holy Ordinance of God may at this time be administered to the glory of God, to our comfort, and the edification of His Church, let us call upon His holy Name:

O Almighty and Eternal God, (who, according to Thy severe judgement, didst punish with the Flood the impenitent and unbelieving World, and according to Thine infinite Mercy *didst save Noah with his family* ; who didst drown hard-hearted Pharaoh with all his people in the Red Sea, *and didst safely lead Thy people Israel through the same, by which Baptism was signified unto us,*) we beseech Thee, that Thou wilt be pleased out of thine infinite mercy, graciously to look upon this Infant, and incorporate him by Thy holy Spirit into Thy Son Jesus Christ, that so he may be buried with Him into His death, and also rise with Him to newness of life, that he, daily following Him, may joyfully bear *his* cross, and cleave unto Him with a true Faith, firm Hope, and fervent Love, and for Thy sake willingly leave this life, (which is nothing else but a continual death) and at the Last Day may appear without fear before the Judgement seat of Christ Thy Son, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, liveth and reigneth for ever. *Amen.*

An Exhortation to the Parents, and those that come with them to Baptism.

Beloved in the Lord, ye have heard that Baptism is an Ordinance of God to seal^a unto us, and unto our seed His Covenant; therefore we must use the same to this end, and not out of custom or superstition. That it may then be manifest that ye are

thus minded, ye are to answer sincerely unto these Questions.

First, Whether you do not acknowledge that, though our Children *are conceived and born in Sin*, and therefore are subject to all manner of miseries, yea to Condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of the Church, ought to be baptized?

Secondly, Whether you do not acknowledge the Doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments, and in the Articles of the Christian Faith; (which is also taught in the Christian Churches here) to be the true and perfect Doctrine of Salvation?

Thirdly, Whether you do not promise, and take upon you, to instruct your Children, when they come to the use of their understanding, (every one, whereof he is either Father or Witness,) or to see and help that they be instructed, in the aforesaid Doctrine, to the uttermost of your power?

Answer. Yes, we do.

Then, in Baptizing, the Minister of the Word of God shall say:

N. I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

A Thanksgiving.

O Almighty and most merciful God and Father; we bless and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven

all our sins to us and to our children,^b through the blood of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ; and through Thy Spirit hast accepted us as members of Thine only-begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, sealing and confirming the same by this holy Baptism: We beseech Thee also, through the same Son of Thy love, by Thy holy Spirit always to rule this baptized Infant, that he may be Christianly and godly educated, and grow up and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging Thy fatherly goodness and loving kindness shown to him, and to us all; and may live in all Righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest Jesus Christ; and manfully strive against and overcome sin, Satan, and his whole Kingdom; to laud and praise Thee, and Thy Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, the only true God to all eternity. *Amen.*"

Having referred to this Service in page 182, as worthy to be compared with our own Baptismal Service, I have here inserted it, and would add a few remarks. The expressions which more particularly correspond with our own Service, are printed in Italics. Other expressions, which are worthy of special notice, I have marked with letters for the sake of more easy reference; and to these the following brief remarks apply respectively.

• First it should be noted how strongly it is

asserted, throughout this formulary, that the Sacrament of Baptism is not only a *sign*, but a *seal and sure witness* of those inward and spiritual blessings which we need, and which from Christ alone we can receive. Thus also it is said, in the Dutch Confession, Article XXXIII.

‘ We believe that our gracious God, having regard to our dulness and infirmity, hath instituted the Sacraments, to be seals of His promises, and pledges of His kindness and grace unto us; and thereby also to nourish and sustain our faith; having joined them with the Word of the Gospel, that so He might more effectually propound to our outward senses, both that which He signifies unto us by His Word, and that which He works inwardly in our hearts, assuring us of the Salvation which He doth impart unto us. For they are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by which means God worketh in us through the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the signs are by no means vain or empty, nor instituted with design to frustrate and deceive us: for Christ Jesus is the true object represented by them, without whom they would signify nothing at all.’

‘ The certainty with which Baptism doth seal unto us, and to our children, the blessings which are signified thereby being duly kept in remembrance, it is important to observe, in connexion therewith, the strong terms used in the Thanksgiving at the

conclusion, ‘we bless and praise Thee, *That thou hast forgiven all our sins to us and to our children, through the blood of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ; and through Thy Spirit hast accepted us as members of Thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be Thy children, sealing and confirming the same by this holy Baptism.*’

Let these expressions be compared with those which are so much objected to in our own Service. If it be said, that they are not quite so clear and distinct in their application to *the particular infant just baptized*, it must be allowed that (taking the whole Service into consideration) even in this respect, the difference is in reality much less than in the first instance it might appear to a casual reader. And certainly, in regard to *the whole multitude of baptized children*, the expressions are much stronger; for our Service says nothing, except in reference to the particular Infant baptized, and for whom the prayers have just before been offered: it makes no general assertion with respect ‘*to us, and to our children.*’

Let these things be considered,—let the two Services be duly compared,—and will there not be reason to fear, that those who object to our Baptismal Service have, in reality, forsaken the true Doctrine of the Reformers, in regard to the Sacraments; and have no just view of them as ‘sure witnesses, and effectual signs of Grace, and God’s good will towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in

us,' and in all those 'who rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same.' If the Sacraments be but *bare signs*, then indeed would the objections referred to have much weight: but if they be indeed *effectual means of grace*, in using which with faith, and according to Christ's institution, we are warranted to expect His blessing upon them,—then is the whole of our Baptismal Service admirably suited to those who humbly, sincerely, and in faith, bring their children (or god-children) to that holy Sacrament. It is not possible to draw up a truly *Christian Formulary* for those who are careless, insincere, and unbelieving.

That we may further understand the real sentiments of the Reformers on this point, I will quote one sentence from another Confession of Faith.

'And thus we utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs; no, we assuredly believe, that by Baptism we are engrafted in Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of His justice, by the which our sins are covered and remitted: and also, that in the Supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us, that He becometh the very nourishment and food of our souls.'—*The Old Scottish Confession, (John Knox's) ART. XXI.*

But perhaps it will be said, that one of the objectionable parts of our Baptismal Service, *the promise made by the Sponsors on behalf of the child*, is here

entirely omitted. It is so. But if this part of our Liturgy be still objected to,—notwithstanding all that has been said, pp. 133—142, I would propose a question for serious consideration:

Is there anything more *expressed* in those promises than is necessarily *implied* in the very nature of the Ordinance?

When we present a child for Holy Baptism, and it is by that solemn ordinance openly signed and sealed as a member of the visible Church of Christ,—does this imply, or does it not, a solemn dedication and consecration of that child to the Worship and Service of the Tri-une Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose Name it is baptized? Will any serious and considerate Christian say, that it does *not*? If so, What is the nature and meaning of the Ordinance, so far as the child itself is concerned? Denying this, shall we not make it a very unmeaning ceremony, which binds and obliges the child to nothing? But if it does imply such a consecration of the child to God, What less can such a consecration be supposed to mean, than that the child so dedicated *shall* and *will* renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh; believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith; and constantly obey and keep God's holy will and commandments? And if the very consecration of the child to God actually *implies* all this, and moreover we look for those communications of Divine Grace in connexion with the

Ordinance, which alone can enable him so to do,—what objection can there be to *the solemn and explicit recognition* of those purposes and duties, which are implied in the very nature of the Ordinance, by such promises as the Sponsors are called upon to make, in the name of the child? Is it not highly desirable that every thing which is so *implied*, should be distinctly *expressed* and *declared* in the manner of administering the Ordinance? May we not hope that such explicitness will tend to the instruction and edification of all persons therein concerned? I must be allowed to maintain, that in this, as in other respects, where our Church differs from other Reformed Churches, she has done more wisely and well.

ON CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.¹

Referred to pages 174 and 195.

THERE prevails to a very great extent among professing Christians a prejudice against Creeds and Confessions of Faith! and this is in some more distinct and avowed, and in others more indistinct and latent: many feel a misgiving, if not an antipathy against them, who do not actually proclaim it. The ground usually taken is, that these are merely human compositions, unauthorized additions to the word of God, and often actually substituted for that word, which is the proper object of our Faith. The following observations may help to put this matter in its true light.

1. Those who have been careful in drawing up, and zealous in contending for Creeds and Confes-

¹ This little Tract was originally intended to form part of a very different and more important volume: but having been already published, and bearing upon the general subject of this little work, it is here inserted.

sions, whether in the Primitive Church, or among Protestants, have certainly never intended to add unto the word of God, or to substitute human compositions for it. Their purpose has been, to express in unambiguous terms the sense of Scripture on particular points: and they have no otherwise urged submission to such Creeds than as they were drawn from the Scriptures (the only infallible rule and standard), and could be proved by Scripture. So the compilers of our own Articles expressly declare. (Art. vi.) “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever *is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby*, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith.” And again, “The three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius’s Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: *for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.*” (Art. viii.) So that certainly the design of the compilers was to express and set forth their view of the sense of Scripture, on such points as they considered fundamentally important or specially called for.

2. How important it is that the Church should from time to time express its views of Divine Truth in its own words, may perhaps appear more plain from a simple illustration. There is a period in the process of instruction in which we deem it right that

to us. It is a remarkable remark the very words in
which the instruction is delivered to him. But occa-
sions will continually arise to teach the wise tutor
and to the student, or the fond father to his
children. How express in your own words
the sense and substance of that which I have taught
you. But it is manifest at all that you clearly
understand me. And it is evident that a mere
recitation of the words in which the instruction was
given would not now suffice to would ascertain
whether but the accuracy of the child's memory;
but of all thing that appeared, he might be affix-
ed to the teacher's words a very different meaning
from that which they really were intended to convey.
So it is with the Children of God. Occasions have
arisen, and do continually arise, in which it becomes
evident that the mere words of Scripture are used in
an entirely discripted and perverted sense. What
then is to be done? God in His providence calls
the simple children to express in their own words
the sense of Scripture upon the points in dispute,
and they may understand one another, and know
that they may understand Him. Hence arises a
sense of Confidence of Faith: and those who are
children of God, and understand the Scriptures on
the points in question, are separated from those who
are not. And gathered together as a distinct company,
united in one mind and judgement. And this is left
for succeeding generations, who, search-

ing the Scriptures for themselves, and thereupon adopting the same Creed or Confession, testify to all the world, that they also are of one mind and judgement with the Church in former ages, and that they receive the Scriptures in the same sense.

3. There is another view of this subject, closely connected with the last, yet worthy of being distinctly stated. The ancient word for a Creed was *Symbolum*, which properly signifies a *tally*, *token*, or *watchword*, by which the soldiers of the same army knew one another, and were distinguished from their enemies. Now all true Christians are soldiers of the Cross; they form one army, under one Captain; and, according to the character of the enemies with whom they have more especially to contend, they must have a watchword, or *symbol*, by which they know one another and are distinguished from their adversaries. In the earlier ages of Christianity the conflict was principally with the *Heathen*. A very simple Creed or *symbol* therefore, which set forth some grand doctrines of the Christian Faith, as opposed to Heathenism and Idolatry, was sufficient. And such is that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed. It contains a summary of the Christian Faith, sufficiently full and explicit to contradict those, who took it for their *symbol*, from all their Heathen adversaries. But soon after the end of the third century, the conflict with Heathenism was decided. The altars and temples of Greek and

Roman Idolatry fell down before the cross of Christ ; and from that time forward the chief and most dangerous enemies of the Church were of another class. Heathen Idolaters and persecutors were no longer to be feared ; but the grand device of the great enemy of the Church was to undermine and corrupt it, by false and heretical doctrines arising *from within*, when he had utterly failed to injure it by violence *from without*. A Creed so simple, therefore, no longer sufficed to distinguish the champions of the Truth as it is in Jesus, from their adversaries. It was necessary to draw up one which should distinguish sound and orthodox professors of Christianity, from heretics. Hence arose the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds—plainly and fully stating the grand and fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation (upon which the whole plan of salvation is built) in opposition to all the subtle errors by which the doctrines of the Scripture were assailed. So much of Scriptural Truth as is contained in those Creeds, even the worst enemies of the Gospel were at length compelled to embrace and maintain. And now the great enemy of the Church was compelled to have recourse to more subtle devices still, and at last brought forth his masterpiece of error and delusion, which is Popery. And when God raised up the champions of His Truth in opposition to it, at the time of the Reformation, they also were compelled to frame and to adopt other symbols. Hence

the Confessions of the various Reformed Churches ; all substantially agreeing in doctrine, though variously expressed : insomuch that the real agreement in evangelical truth is even **MORE APPARENT** than if only one such Confession had been drawn up. In all these cases the design and purpose of the Creed or Confession evidently was, to distinguish the soldiers of the truth from those of error. And without such declarations of their Faith, it does not appear how the Reformed Churches could have been formed, or the contest with Popery maintained.

4. If we duly consider the history of the Church, with an humble reference to the all-controlling government and watchful care of Him who is its living and exalted Head, we shall clearly perceive that all these Creeds and Confessions arose out of the circumstances and necessities of the times in which they were drawn up. There was no previous purpose or design of any set of men to impose a form of doctrine upon others ; but, being engaged in a conflict with error, they were constrained to set forth, in opposition to those errors, a clear and full declaration of the Scriptural doctrines which they maintained. And all those Creeds and Confessions to which I have alluded were drawn up by men of faith and prayer, deeply read and exercised in the Holy Scriptures, and seeking direction from God in the course which they adopted. So that he who despises and rejects such Creeds and Confessions in

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the mass, entirely overlooks the providence of God over His Church, and the administration of that government to which the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted.

5. And if we thoroughly examine the ground on which the objections to Creeds and Confessions rest, will it not appear at length to be simply this? That the sense of Scripture—the true doctrine of the Bible—is supposed to be so vague and uncertain, so indistinctly and confusedly expressed, that it is not possible to express it in words of our own; but, just as if it was contained in a language which we do not understand, or set forth in dubious or unintelligible terms, we must content ourselves with a mere repetition of the precise words in which it is conveyed! If a truth be clear in itself, and be clearly understood by us, we can both express it in language of our own, and instantly recognise it when expressed in different ways. And when we cannot do this, must it not be feared, that, instead of a clear view of *the Truth*, we have only an accurate remembrance of, and blind attachment to, *the mere words* in which it has been first conveyed to us? I do not believe, I cannot persuade myself, that there is any thing so vague and uncertain in the doctrines of the Bible, as the common objections against Creeds and Confessions seem to imply. I believe, on the contrary, that what is revealed is clearly and distinctly revealed: so that if we do not rightly understand it, the fault

is in ourselves ; we are too indolent and careless, or too wilful and perverse, to understand the truth declared in Scripture ; we are too much puffed up with a fond conceit of our own wisdom, or too much tied and bound with the chain of our sins, to submit our minds and hearts to the word of God. But “ let God be true, and every man a liar ; ” let God be wise, and every man a fool. It is little short of blasphemy to maintain, directly or indirectly, that what He hath spoken is not wisely, graciously, sincerely, and plainly spoken : or that the doctrines, on which our souls’ comfort and salvation rest, are so stated in His word, that those who seek humbly, earnestly, and sincerely for instruction, shall yet remain in error, or come to opposite conclusions. Therefore I must believe and maintain that whenever the Great Head of the Church has called His faithful people to examine into particular doctrines, He has enabled them to ascertain the truth, and with such accuracy to express it, that the doctrine, once ascertained and clearly stated by His faithful people, remains a settled doctrine, a fixed and decided point, for the comfort and instruction of all succeeding generations. Nor do I believe that the Holy Universal Church of Christ has ever been left to an agreement and concord in error : whatsoever may have been the case with particular individuals, or bodies of men, who in a schismatical spirit have separated themselves from the body of Christ ; or howsoever ‘ the Syna-

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gogue of Satan,' pretending to follow the example of the true Church, has riveted upon its deluded votaries the fetters of error, by similar means to those which the true Church of the living God hath used to confirm her children in the truth: even as the Egyptians, by following the course which led the children of Israel to safety and triumph, were overwhelmed and destroyed in the Red Sea. (Heb. xi. 29.)

I would only observe, in conclusion, that *now* is the time when, instead of discarding Creeds and Confessions, all real soldiers of the Cross should seek to be united and bound together in an orthodox Confession, and to have some fixed and settled *symbol* or watch-word, by which they may be distinguished from all the various classes of the champions of error, in the strenuous and earnest defence of great, fundamental, saving doctrines. *Now* is the time when a distinct Confession of Faith, which shall pledge us to a determined conflict against Popery in all its various forms, against Arianism and Socinianism in all their degrees and ramifications, against the Latitudinarianism, Liberalism, and Infidelity of the age, is peculiarly needed. In fine —*Now* is the time when a strict and resolute adherence to the Articles of the Church of England, in all their clearness and fulness, is most fervently to be desired, as the true and proper *symbol* of all those who are set for the defence of the truth, in opposition

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to the countless and still multiplying errors and delusions of these awful times.¹

¹ On this subject the Reader is also referred to Two Letters on the Constitution of the Reformation Society, in the Protestant Journal for June and for November, 1834, pp. 385 and 701, by the author of this volume.

CONCLUSION.

THE foregoing letters have extended to a much greater length than I expected; yet my readers will find, that on some points they are very brief; while on others, which are yet important, I have not touched at all: some of them, therefore, will be glad that I should refer to other works, in which they may find further information. It would be no difficult matter to make out a long and valuable list: but I will only mention a few.

Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity is so well known, and has been, ever since its publication, so highly and justly esteemed, that it might seem superfluous to mention it here; were it not that to write in defence of the Church of England, without a distinct reference to the work of her ablest champion, would look like an act of injustice, both to the Cause, and to its learned and pious defender: more especially as Hooker has written in the very spirit in which I should desire to write; and has produced a work, every page of which is calculated, as well to edify the soul and to promote real godlieness, as to uphold

the Ecclesiastical Polity of the Church to which he belonged.

But this perhaps is not an age in which we can expect a *folio* volume to be read—especially one which is written with profound thought, and therefore requires to be read with much attention and study. I will therefore mention some smaller works.

Wheatly on the Book of Common Prayer contains much information, and serves to elucidate many points on which information may be desired.

M'Neile's Letters on the Church, lately published, are well worthy of perusal, and are written in a very plain and easy style. I should have taken occasion to say something more, on the objections made with respect to the want of discipline in our Church ; but that the question is so ably handled, in a sermon which Mr. M'Neile has inserted in his little volume, that it is more satisfactory to my own mind merely to refer to that.

The Rev. A. M'Caul, with whom I have had the privilege of labouring for the welfare of Israel, has lately published *three Sermons on “The Divine Commission of the Christian Ministry, and the Principles of a Church Establishment,”* which I have great pleasure in recommending to my readers.

A friend lately sent me the first volume of a truly valuable work, entitled, “*The Liturgy compared with the Bible* ; or, An Illustration and Confirmation, by Scripture Quotations and References, of such

parts of the Book of Common Prayer, &c. as are not direct extracts from the Holy Scriptures : " *by the Rev. Henry Ives Bailey* ; which I trust will meet with such encouragement, as to induce the Author to follow it with the second volume, which will contain the Occasional Services of our Church.

The Rev. W. Hancock, of Kilburn, has published a little book entitled " Hear the Church. Ten Discourses on some of the principal Articles of the united Church of England and Ireland," containing a very clear and concise statement of some of her most important Doctrines : of which the main excellence is, that the pious writer has been very careful throughout, to express himself in the very words of our Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies, with abundant proofs and confirmation from the Holy Scriptures. I rejoice to see that this work has reached a third Edition, and most glad should I feel, if it could be put into the hands of every Member of the Church of England.

I should also mention, " *Essays on the Church: by a Layman*," of which a second Edition has just been published. The Christian Friend, to whom the foregoing letters were addressed, has referred to these more than once in the course of our Correspondence, as having given her important information.¹ These Essays enter fully into some parts

¹ But it was not only from works written in defence of the

of the question which I have barely touched upon, and into many details respecting facts, which I had no call or opportunity to bring forward.

For any further explanation of my own views upon points on which my Readers might desire fuller information, I must refer to a Volume of "*Sermons, chiefly on Subjects connected with the present State and Circumstances of the Church and of the World,*" which I lately published, and to which there are several allusions in the preceding letters. My principal reason, however, for mentioning it here, is, that I am desirous of taking the first public opportunity of retracting the harsh and rash judgement pronounced upon Coleridge in one of the notes. It is true that what I have there said refers to a book entitled, "*Aids to Reflection,*" which was published more than ten years ago, and which,—if it were to be considered as the Author's *final judgement* upon the subject of Religion, and to be taken as a fair

Church, that my Christian Sister found assistance in her enquiries. *An enemy of the Church*, in a book written expressly against it, has had the confidence to assert that eleven of the *Thirty-nine Articles* were *totally destitute of Scriptural proof or foundation*. My Christian friend, somewhat startled at the boldness of this assertion, turned at once to her Bible, and soon succeeded, without any other assistance, in finding at least *some* plain Scriptural proof, for every one of the Articles enumerated.

and full statement of those views of Christianity in which he *ultimately* rested,—might perhaps not unfairly be considered as justifying the strong terms in which I have spoken of it. But I am happy to find, that it ought not to be so considered ; and can now perceive that, even when I read the book, I ought not to have looked upon it in that light. It only marked a point in the *progress* of one who was slowly toiling upwards towards the light of heaven, out of a very fearful abyss of metaphysical philosophy¹—which was but, indeed, a very specious form of Infidelity ; and who had much still to learn, and much *to unlearn*, (which is often the most difficult part of our learning)—and who, in coming to the childlike simplicity of the humble Christian, was greatly hindered by his own gigantic powers of mind. For it is written: “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from *the wise and prudent*, and hast revealed them unto *babes*. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” (Matt. xi. 25, 26.) And therefore we find continually, that, while the promise is fulfilled, that “the way-faring men, *though fools*, shall not err,” in the ways of holiness, (Isa. xxxv. 8.) those who are unquestionably men of the most splendid talents, through long and painful enquiries, dubious

¹ Colossians ii. 8.

questionings, sore temptations, and manifold afflictions, are slowly brought at length to know that, which poor, simple, and unlearned souls not unfrequently learn as it were in a day. Blessed are they who, by whatsoever method, are brought to know, and rest, and rejoice in, the simple Gospel at last ! And it is very delightful to my soul, to find that Coleridge was one of this happy number. When he wrote the book I have mentioned,—sadly erroneous as it is on some fundamental points,—he had learned to love and honour the Apostolic Leighton—(than whom, among uninspired men, he could not have a better instructor)—and I ought not to have overlooked in my remarks, that this indicated great and real progress, since the time when he published his *Biographia Literaria*. And, in his latest productions, he appears evidently to have come to truly sound and Scriptural views upon those points, respecting which the greatest deficiencies are observable in his “Aids to Reflection :” he expresses himself in the very language of our Reformers, and evidently rests upon “the Righteousness of Christ,”—which indicates that he had attained to clear views of the Doctrine of Justification (as stated in our Third Homily)—on which we find nothing that even looks like sound doctrine in the book above mentioned. This is, as Luther well expressed it, the “*Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae:*”¹ and how should we

¹ “The Article of a standing or a falling Church.”

rejoice, when a soul, that had been long in darkness and perplexity, is found at length to be clear and sound in regard to it ! Most gladly therefore do I retract all that could be construed as passing a personal judgement upon Coleridge, and take this public opportunity of acknowledging him as a brother in the faith and hope of the everlasting Gospel ; and of expressing my regret, that I suffered any fears or suspicions to prevent me from seeking his acquaintance, when I had (which was indeed the case) the best opportunity of so doing.

Another remark I take this opportunity of making, because it will be found to stand in close connection with the main subject of this volume. In the Sermon, " On the state of the Country," from Isaiah v. 3—5, I perceive that, in page 194, I have fallen into the common mistake of speaking of the *King*, *Lords*, and *Commons*, as the *three Estates* of the realm. This mode of speaking,—though it has, for a long time past, become so common, that one falls into it, almost as a matter of course,—is totally incorrect, and founded upon false views of the proper place and authority both of the Church and of the King, in the British Constitution. The three Estates of the Realm are the *Commons*, the *Nobility*, and the *Clergy*,—each of which has its proper deliberative Assembly, in the House of Commons, the House of Peers, and the Houses of Convocation. These three Estates are variously linked together. The *Lords* and *Commons*

by the frequent elevation of Commoners to the Peerage, and the many instances in which (as is indeed most desirable and proper) the various branches of noble families sit as Representatives in the House of Commons. The Clergy and Nobility are united in the House of Peers, in which the Bishops and Archbishops have seats, *ex officio*. But the great bond of union is in the person of the King, who is the Head of each Estate, separately considered, and supreme over all combined: insomuch that each Estate can only be assembled at his summons, and sit during his pleasure. He can assemble, prorogue, and dissolve them at his will; nor can any act be passed without his consent. This gives us at once an important view of the doctrine declared in our 37th Article, and implied in that common expression (so often objected to by many) that *the King is the Head of the Church*: that is to say, he is the Head of *the Third Estate* of his kingdom, as well as of *the other two*. This must be maintained by all who understand at all the Constitution of our Country. Deny this, and you either (with the Papists) make the Third Estate of the realm independent of the King, and subject to a Foreign Potentate; or else, (with Infidels) destroy the Third Estate altogether; or (with the Dissenters) make it an independent Republic, within the bounds of the kingdom, incapable of uniting with the other two Estates; and therefore (of necessity) at least *liable to become a*

continual occasion of disquiet, and nursery of discontent and rebellion. Those who have enough of political wisdom to understand, that an *imperium in imperio* is inconsistent with the peace and safety and prosperity of a Country ;—or who know enough of their Bibles to have learned, that, God is not a God of confusion, but of order ; and that the powers that be are wisely and graciously ordained of Him, for the peace and welfare of the whole Community ; will alike perceive, that the view taken, and the doctrine maintained, by the Church of England, is the only view which is consistent with the Principles of the British Constitution, or with the real well-being of our Country.

And now, before I finally conclude, I would gladly take the opportunity of addressing three classes of persons, to whom, of course, the form and nature of the preceeding part of this volume did not permit me to speak directly. And, under present circumstances, while I desire to do this with Christian sincerity, I hope to do it with all Christian kindness.

1. I will suppose my Reader to be *one who has left the Church of England*, on account of some, or all, of the objections alluded to in the preceeding pages. Allow me then, in all plainness and faithfulness, to propose a few questions for your serious consideration.

You have left the Church of England. Are you prepared to prove that this is not a true Church?

insomuch that you can clearly shew, upon Scriptural grounds, that your soul's salvation was endangered by your continuance in communion with her? or at least can you prove that her Doctrine is so unsound, her Sacraments so essentially different from the original institution of Christ, her whole Constitution so utterly corrupt, her Worship so superstitious, that, ordinarily speaking, conversion, edification, and salvation are not to be expected in attendance upon her ordinances, when (according to her own principles) they are faithfully administered? It is highly probable that you yourself can abundantly witness, that this is not the case. Was it not within her pale that you found the life of your soul? that perhaps you found, besides, far more of real edification than ever you have found since? If this has not been the case with *you*, it has been with hundreds and with thousands, who, like yourself, have deserted "the mother that bare you." I may boldly appeal to the great and evident blessing of God upon her ordinances, and upon those who faithfully administer and diligently attend them, that nothing of this kind can with any show, either of reason or charity, be pretended. The Churches of Christ in other lands, from the time of the Reformation downward, have always readily acknowledged her as a Sister. *Their* most faithful Ministers have always acknowledged *her* faithful Ministers as Brethren beloved in the Lord. Also the most excellent men and Ministers among

the Dissenters (though, perhaps, their separation from her is more excusable than yours,—as being inherited from their fathers, and founded upon prejudices in which they have been trained up from their infancy) are very glad to acknowledge her faithful Ministers as Brethren in Christ, and desire to be so acknowledged by them. What does this amount to, but that, by the general confession of those who dissent from her, she is indeed a true Christian and Protestant Church? And if she is so, even by the confession of her enemies (as we may justly maintain) what *could* justify your separation from her? Is it a light matter to separate yourself from a true and living limb of Christ's mystical body? from that portion of it, in connection with which His Providence had placed you and (perhaps I may add) His grace first found you? If this is not done at the peril of your soul, it is no thanks to *you*; but merely to the power and grace of that Lord, who saves you and preserves you, contrary to all your deserving, even when you are, in a manner, running wilfully into destruction: for certainly edification and salvation are not to be expected *in separation from*, but *in closer union with*, a true and living portion of the Church. And you had to consider, not only your own edification and salvation, but that of all them with whom you were connected. The Church at large, and the particular Congregation to which you belonged, had claims upon your affections, your prayers, and your diligent exertions.

What *could* justify your neglect of all this? Certainly none of those objections which have been canvassed in the preceding letters: nor any of similar weight and importance. And I think I have considered the weightiest that are, or can be brought.

But I suppose that, in your case, the separation has already taken place; and you have persuaded yourself that you had good and sufficient grounds for so doing. *The union between Church and State* appeared to you so completely to secularize that which ought not to be of this world, that it was not to be endured. *The Episcopal form of Government* seemed to give to an individual such authority over his brethren, as was utterly irreconcileable with *your* views of Scripture, and of the independence and liberty of the Ministers of the Gospel—yea, perhaps, to savour of Popery. The very fact of setting up *an authorized standard of Doctrine*, or *public Confession of faith*, and *a prescribed Liturgy and printed form of prayer*, seemed to you an unauthorized and unhallowed interference with the rights of conscience. And besides, you think *our Liturgy*, if not *our Articles*, so full of imperfections and errors, that you cannot conscientiously give even a tacit assent to the one, or worship God in the use of the other. Moreover, if it were possible that you could be satisfied upon all these points, still you consider the Church of England *so corrupt in the Administration*; *the Patronage and the Discipline so improperly exercised*, or *so sinfully neglected*, that you

deem it high time to come out and be separate from such a depraved and corrupted Church, lest you should become partaker of the sins of her children, and receive of the plagues they are bringing upon themselves.

I will suppose, to make the case as strong as possible on your behalf, that *all* these considerations have combined to drive you out of the Church. Now then, let me ask, how far have you succeeded in escaping from these evils? Be fair and honest in this matter. Do not so begat~~e~~ yourself as to be lynx-eyed in spying out the evils of one system, and then wink hard as to all the evils of another. *Are there no similar and corresponding evils connected with the whole system of Dissent, and practically exemplified in the particular body or congregation to which you belong?* I do not wish to be harsh or unkind: but, if you are in a state of delusion, it is for your soul's health, and for your eternal welfare, that I should endeavour to open your eyes, by calling you to the serious consideration of a few plain questions.

You object to the *union between Church and State*: you think that it *secularizes the Church*, and of necessity involves an unhallowed alliance between the Church and the World. Do you really mean what you say? If so, what think you then of an union between Church and Anti-State? Is not this at least as bad? I hear mention, on many occasions which are merely secular, and in reference to the Politics of this

'World, of what is called "The Dissenting Interest." Can you actually persuade yourself that there is anything more, or even so much, of an unhallowed alliance between the Church and the World in that union between Church and State to which you so much object, as is of necessity employed in this very term? What! do Dissenters, as such; and professing such purity of spiritual principle, unite together for the defence of their civil rights, or for the attainment of merely civil privileges, in a certain political phalanx called "The Dissenting Interest;"—yea, and ally themselves with Socinians, Infidels, and Papists, for such objects; and then pretend to object to the union between Church and State upon *Christian* principles? Is there any thing in the union between Church and State, which can reasonably be expected, or which is found in fact, so much to secularize Religion, as those preposterous and unhallowed alliances, in which the Dissenters, as a body, are at this day involved? What is this, I beseech you, but to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel? Consider diligently what is written (Mat. vii. 3—5.) before you ever again open your mouth against the union between Church and State.

Mere political Dissenters, and mere political Churchmen, are alike "of this world;" and have alike the broad, unquestionable stamp of mere and utter worldliness upon them. They are so entirely *secular* already, that I suppose you will not pretend that any

thing can have any tendency to secularize them. When we speak of the danger of the Church being secularized, we mean to indicate the danger, lest truly spiritual persons, the pious and devoted children of God, should be induced so far to forget their high and heavenly calling, as to be hindered in their Christian race, by the concerns of this world, defiled with its pollutions, and fettered and enslaved to its perishing vanities. The danger is that *their* standard should be debased. Now is it not a plain and undeniable fact, that there is much more in the system of Dissent, and the present position of the Dissenters, to secularize that portion, both of the Ministers and people, who make the highest profession of serious and vital Religion, than there is in the Constitution of the Church of England, as united with the State, to debase the standard of her faithful and spiritual children? And is it not actually the fact, that among the Dissenters, the line of separation between the spiritual and the worldly, is far less clearly drawn? and that the spiritual part of them are more entangled with the things of this world, and more injured thereby, than in the Church of England? The spirit and principles of *the Church of England* lead her faithful children to be quiet and peaceable subjects, leaving the government of their Country, and the concerns of this world, to those to whom they belong; and only intermingling in them when, and so far as, duty directly calls. The spirit and principles of *Dissent*

seem to lead men continually to meddle with things which do not belong to them, and “with those who are given to change.” Does not the whole of their political conduct, at the present day, shew too plainly that, as a body, the Dissenters have drunk deep into the spirit of the World?—yea, so deeply, that they now seem content to learn their political principles from Socinians and Infidels; and to take *those* for their companions and brethren, their leaders and guides, in the measures they adopt, and the ends which they pursue!

And even if you should turn aside from the general body of the Dissenters, to consider the particular Congregation to which you belong, and beyond which, you will perhaps say, you do not desire to look, nor need to enquire—is there nothing *there* at work, to introduce into that little sphere the taint and infection of worldliness, as surely and powerfully, at least, as the union between Church and State could do? Are there no *secular interests* to be considered, which at least occasion a strong temptation to the *Ministers* and to that which you consider as ‘*the Church*,’ to be careful not to offend certain individuals, or a certain class, who happen to have *much influence*, when (according to *your principles*) they ought to have *little or none*?—which, perhaps insensibly, but most effectually, constrain both the Minister and the ‘*Church*’ to be partial in the discharge of their duties? In the choice of a Minister,

are you not compelled to consider, Whether he has *popular talents*, which will be likely to fill the Chapel and keep up the Congregation? Is not the Minister compelled to consider the peculiar notions, and the peculiar tastes, of certain classes, or certain individuals, in his Congregation,—so as sometimes materially to hamper him in his Ministry, as a faithful dispenser of the Word of God? What more than this could the Union between Church and State do to secularize those things which ought to be purely spiritual?

You like not *the power and authority of our Bishops*. You think that there is in the very office an assumption of lordship over their brethren, with whom they ought to be on a footing of equality. Well then, let me ask, Are there no *Bishops* among the Dissenters—*Ministers* who, from the circumstances of superior talent, station, influence, wealth, and popularity, take occasion to lord it over their weaker and poorer, but perhaps more pious and devoted brethren? Are there no *Lay Popes* among them (or is there no *Lord Deacon* in your own Congregation?) who take upon themselves to dictate to Ministers what and how they shall preach? and who exercise a much more powerful, constant, and galling authority over their unfortunate Pastors, than any Bishop in the Church of England does, or can do, over his Clergy? And let it be remembered, that (while human nature continues what it is) the authority which is thus usurped,

in opposition to all professed principles, will always be more cruelly exercised, and must, in its very nature, be much more galling, than any authority which is lawfully established, and fully understood and recognised on all hands; for in the latter case every one knows, that deference and submission to a certain extent is due, and is prepared to render them as a matter of course: indeed a well-disposed mind will always render them with pleasure—it is a regular part of its known and acknowledged duties.

You object to *Creeds* and *Confessions*. Is there among Dissenters, or in the particular Congregation to which you belong, no *unwritten Creed*—no *traditional System of Religious notions*, which the Minister must not dare to contradict or overstep, and which has all, and more than all, the ill effects that you can ascribe to an authorized and acknowledged *Confession*, without any of its advantages? And do not the Lay-Popes, to whom I have alluded, exercise very often an unauthorized and unhallowed influence, that interferes with the rights of Conscience in an humble and faithful Pastor, and in many of the people; and which an ample and recognized *Confession of Faith* might be a great and effectual mean of preventing? And as for the *Liturgy and its supposed defects*, is not the *Hymn Book* you use a printed *Liturgy*? Is not every prayer which your Minister offers, a mere form of prayer *to you*? And if that *Hymn Book* and those *Prayers* were subjected to a scrupu-

tiny as severe and uncharitable as that to which you subject our Liturgy,—would it not be easy to find out errors and defects ten times more, both in number and magnitude, than those which you can pretend to point out in our Book of Common Prayer? Yea—this I may boldly say, without the least approximation to any breach of Charity, that, go through the length and breadth of the land—choose where you will—and pick out the Minister whom you yourself consider as having most of the gift of Prayer, and as being the most correct in his expressions, and devotional in his spirit,—if all his prayers, from the beginning of the year to the end, were, or could be, taken down *verbatim*, and subjected to a rigid scrutiny; do you in your own conscience think, or can you even imagine, that the errors and defects and absurdities—the offences against grammar, common sense, and sound Doctrine, would not outweigh ten, and twenty, and an hundred fold, all that you can even pretend to allege against our Liturgy? At home and abroad I have heard abundance of extemporaneous prayers: and this I perceive, that, if I did not exercise a disposition to put the most charitable construction upon the expressions used, and the words that escape unawares, I never should be able to listen to an extempore prayer with any comfort or edification at all. Not that I condemn such prayers in proper place and season, or undervalue the gift in those who have any measure of it: no—if there be

really *the spirit of prayer*, I can readily pass over all such defects, and listen to, and join in them, with edification and delight: and the charity I am called upon to exercise tends, doubtless, to increase both the one and the other. But they who have such very large claims upon a charitable hearing and construction of expressions, used in those prayers which they profess to approve, ought at least (for common decency's sake) to lay aside all disposition to carp and cavil at our Liturgy, and to shew a disposition to put the most favourable construction upon any expressions in it, which seem *to them* not the best that might have been chosen; but which (they should remember) may be looked upon in a totally different light *by others*.

But on this point I must ask another question. How many times, since you left the Church of England, and absented yourself from her Services, have you really attended *Public Worship*?—I mean such Worship that you could yourself feel satisfied was *Public*, or of such a nature, that all the praying part of a Congregation could be supposed, intelligently and spiritually, to unite in it? My dear friend, I must needs speak plainly, for I am dealing with your conscience, and it would be worse than vain to mince matters.—I fear that many, many of your Sabbaths have been passed, without ever attending Public Worship at all: even though you went three times to Chapel upon each of them. For to go to a Chapel and

listen, even with edification and delight, to what is called a Prayer—and which sometimes may deserve that name—sometimes is only a sort of oratorical declamation in the form of a Prayer, sometimes a devout Meditation, and sometimes more like a Sermon than anything else;¹ ah! my dear friend, this is not to attend *Public Worship*; nor does it assume that character, even if yourself and three or four more have really and truly joined in it, when it best deserved the name of an humble and Scriptural Prayer. It is not really *Public Worship* unless the great Congregation can be supposed, with one mind and one mouth, to unite in it. And how often is this possible when Prayer is really extemporaneous? If the Prayer be a studied form of the Minister's own composing, repeated with little variation till his people almost know it by heart,—what is this but a Liturgy, which he is compelled to have recourse to, though he has not the honesty to own it?

But then, *the Corruptions in the Administration of our Church?* To this at last you must come; and here at least you think you have strong ground. Perhaps, in your particular neighbourhood, every thing con-

¹ Among the faults of *Preaching*, is one that commonly goes under the significant name of *preaching AT certain persons*. Is there not occasionally, among other evils connected with the extemporaneous prayers in Dissenting Chapels, an abomination (it deserves no milder name) that may too aptly be called *praying AT them?*

nected with the administration of the Patronage, Ministry, and Discipline of the Church, seemed to you corrupt and unsound; and your conscience was alarmed at the very thought of even appearing to countenance or connive at such iniquities as you beheld—such profanation of holy things as continually took place before you: and you left the Church in disgust.

I am not one of those who are disposed to deny or palliate evils and corruptions *which really exist*: And this I know, that nothing ever was administered by the hands of man, but presently in that administration abundant corruptions were manifest; and the Scriptures, which so plainly describe the natural state of all mankind, most clearly and fully ascertain the reason. See Ps. xiv. 1—3. Jer. xvii. 9. Rom. iii. 10—19, &c. Look at the administration of God's own Laws and Ordinances, in the time of Eli (1 Sam. i—iv.), of Isaiah (Is. i—v.), of Jeremiah (as appears from the whole Book), and of our blessed Lord (as appears from the whole of the Evangelical History). *Here* were corruptions and abominations, at least as gross and awful as the worst of her enemies can pretend to allege against the Church of England, or any portion of it? Was then *the System* to be condemned? Were *the principles* of the Jewish Church unsound? Or were the people of God commanded to come out and be separate from that Church, on account of those *practica* corruptions? It is very

true that when iniquity had reached its height—when those corruptions had not only become universal, but when the Jewish Priests and people had long persevered in them, without repentance or humiliation, in spite of the manifold warnings which God sent to them by His servants the Prophets ;—then, at length, He revealed Himself as a God of Judgement, and sent forth the armies of His wrath with a commission to lay waste and destroy; and both Jerusalem and the Temple were utterly subverted, and the people were carried into captivity. But His vengeance was not executed by His own faithful people: *they* had no hand in it; *they* mourned and lamented over the ruins of their Church and their Country—even when they most fully glorified God for his righteous judgements. The instruments of His wrath were *ignorant Heathens and abominable Idolaters*, with whom His chosen and faithful people could never hold the least communion; much less join with them to assist in the work of destruction. The godly remnant in Judah loved and clave to their Church and Country to the last, notwithstanding the practical iniquities which they beheld and the judgements which they foresaw.

Here, then, was a Scriptural example for you to follow, if you supposed the practical evils in the Church of England to be as great as those of the Jewish Church in the time of Jeremiah ; yea, even if you found reason to believe, that the measure of her

iniquities was full, the corruption universal, and all things ripe for judgement. But are you prepared to maintain thus much ?

It is unquestionable that, in the present state of things, ALL human administrations will be attended with many and great evils. And it needs to be taken into the account, that *the vast extent* of the Church of England leaves a far wider space for the workings of human corruption to unfold themselves, than could be found in a more contracted sphere. The very circumstance of her embracing such multitudes of all ranks and classes, from the highest to the lowest, brings with it this necessary consequence, that (while men are men) she must be liable to an accumulation and variety of evils of practice and administration, for which a narrower circle and more limited community afford no space. Her vast extent also, whilst it gives greater opportunity for the diffusion of her blessings, makes her administration more difficult, and the general enforcement of her principles more unequal. It is, therefore, very easy, but not very fair, for one, whose duties and observation extend only to the management of one small dissenting Congregation, to find out faults and imperfections in the administration of a National Church. It may so happen, that the talents and influence of a single individual may secure, in so narrow a circle, all that you would think it desirable to attempt: not to mention that, in that narrow circle, none are to be found but *those who*

now a body of men and ministers who submit themselves to the government and discipline which is necessary while a National Church extends (or at least endeavours to extend) her material care to all—
a the poor, persons and institutions, as well as to the poor, persons and institutions. Therefore a National Church has difficulties to encounter, of which Dissenters indeed in the voluntary system can know little or nothing. But it is one main point of the glory and excellence of a National Church, that she does ~~encouragement~~. Nor should it be forgotten that among her possible difficulties are to be numbered, as not the least, those which are caused directly and immediately, by the Dissenting Churches, which she not only tolerates, but defends from many inconveniences in whom they would otherwise be exposed, and from whom they could not defend themselves.

Now then, in reference to these corruptions in administration. I have, as on other points, two or three questions to ask. And first—Are you content to make a *fair comparison*? If you pick out, at your *own choice*, any Dissenting Congregation, are you content to institute a comparison between that and the best regulated Parishes which we can find in the Church of England? for surely, if you compare the *best regulated* Congregations among the Dissenters with the *worst administered* Parishes or Districts in the Church of England¹ (which I am afraid is very com-

¹ Or if, as sometimes happens, when there has occurred

monly done) or even with *the ordinary run* of our Parishes, and what you conceive to be *the average* administration,—the comparison is any thing in the world but fair and honest. Or are you content to compare *the whole* of the Dissenting Congregations, throughout the length and breadth of the land, with *the whole* of the Parishes in the Church of England? The circumstances I have already alluded to, make it very evident, that *this* comparison would not be quite fair as to *us*,—because our sphere of operations, and our difficulties, are so much greater. But on either of these grounds, we shall not shrink from the comparison. And *then*, if you speak of corruptions in practice, I will ask you: Are there no corruptions to be confessed and bewailed among the Dissenters? Is there no corrupt influence at work in the building and disposal of Chapels?¹ in the appointment of

an instance of mal-administration or failure in anything connected with the operations and proceedings of the Church of England,—something is immediately after *got up* by one or other of the Dissenting bodies in the neighbourhood, which is so contrived as to pass off with great *eclat*! and serves as an occasion for vaunting, and for courting and obtaining popularity. Are such things *fair*? or can they be considered as *Christian*?

¹ As when a Chapel is advertised for sale, to the best bidder, with special note of the advantages of the situation: and any Dissenter, who thinks it worth his while, can purchase it, and

Ministers ? in the management of Congregations ? in the application of funds ? Are there no disgraceful scenes of riot and confusion naturally arising out of the Dissenting plan of electing Ministers,—in which all the bitter and angry passions of the old Adam are called into exercise,—and for which the principles of the Church of England admit no opportunity ? Besides all which (though it would be easy, without going further, to find sad and mournful parallels to all the abuses you can charge upon the Establishment), it behoves you to remember, that *the Principles of Dissent*, or rather *the want of fixed and definite Principles*, must lay you open continually to the intrusion of all manner of avowed and shameless heresies into pulpits, from which you once looked for the full and distinct proclamation of the Gospel

instal himself as the Minister, without any examination, superintendence, or control. And, of course, he has every inducement so to preach as to make the best of his bargain ! Does not this look as much, or more, like direct *Simony* than any thing which is to be found in the Church of England. *Proprietary Chapels*, in the Establishment, I consider as strange anomalies and great evils ; though, perhaps, in many cases they are, at present, unavoidable evils. Still, in regard to these, the Bishop has full authority to examine, to give or refuse a licence, and to exercise due afterwards superintendence over the Minister, so as to prevent many evils which otherwise might arise.

of Christ. If you take Dissent as a system, you must take it as a whole; and all the corruptions of the Gospel by Antinomian and fanatical Seceders from the Church; all the Arian and Socinian heresies, which cannot find endurance within her pale; must be reckoned among the corruptions and abominations of Dissent: to which it is not only *liable* as mere defects of administration, but as evils which (*indirectly* at least) are *countenanced by some of its principles*: and which, we must maintain, are *directly* countenanced by it, so long as that unhallowed alliance in Red Cross Street subsists.

I do not here make any mention of *particular* facts, as that would be invidious, and contrary to the nature and design of this volume. But *you* must know perfectly well, that out of Dissenting Publications, I could easily produce facts and acknowledgements, which would supply most painful answers to all the questions I have now proposed to you.

If the practical corruptions of the Church of England have driven you out of her pale, ought not the practical corruptions of the Dissenting Churches to drive you back again?

Moreover, if you desire to be really conscientious in this matter, it behoves you to consider how far *you yourself*, by separating from the Church, increase the difficulties in the way of such administration as you profess to desire; and do that which tends to perpetuate the corruptions against which you so loudly declaim.

This is but enlarging, to the whole subject before us, the questions which I have already put (p. 279. 280.) in reference to one particular branch of it. But it surely requires the most serious and profound enquiry, What is to be the end of this, if every person who is impressed with such deep and serious views of Religion, as to observe and lament imperfections and corruptions in the administration of our Church: (I will not here enquire how far these may be exaggerated, if not some of them imaginary), should thereupon leave the Church as you have done? If, laying aside all other grounds of objection to our Church, you are constrained to come at last to *Abuses in the Administration*, surely the question for every considerate and truly Christian mind will be, 'How are these to be rectified?' Is it possible that you should do any real good by running away from your post? To whom can a faithful Pastor look, for real assistance, in correcting actual abuses, if not to those who, from a deep sense of the value and importance of pure and undefiled religion, are deeply concerned on account of them? and who already see and lament them? To whom can he look to strengthen his hands in the due discharge of his own duties, and the faithful administration of that portion of the government of the Church, which is committed unto him as the Minister of the Parish; if not to those who profess to be most deeply concerned for the honour and purity of Religion and its Ordinances! If *these* desert him and

forsake the Church ; yea, and join themselves to the ranks of her enemies ; so soon as they discover those abuses or imperfections, which, by kindness and affection, by a willing and ready deference to his directions, and by the force of a consistent conduct and example, they should help and encourage him to correct and supply ; what is like to be the end of all this ? Must not his hands hang down ? must he not be discouraged ? must he not feel, with anguish of spirit, that all effort is vain ? and must not the evils you complain of, consequently continue and increase ? But who is to blame ? *You yourself* are, both positively and negatively, both by omission and commission, a wicked accomplice in all the evil which you so loudly denounce. You first weaken the hands of your Pastor, by deserting him ; and then throw fresh difficulties in his way, by joining with his adversaries !

And perhaps one of the evils you most loudly denounce is *the want of Discipline*. Now, have you ever considered under what circumstances anything like strict Discipline would be possible ? If the whole Church were closely united as one body, in which a good understanding and truly brotherly feelings prevailed through every part, then indeed very strict Discipline would be practicable : a much stricter Discipline than is even desirable might be easily enforced. But when the visible Church is split into so many sections, between which there is *no* regular communication, and which too often are bitterly

opposed to each other,—how is it possible to enforce anything like the Discipline you insist on? For so soon as a Member of the Church of England is censured or admonished, or difficulties are made about the Baptism of his children, and he chooses thereupon to take offence and turn his back upon the Church, can you tell me how many different sects there will be, who will be glad to receive him with open arms: to take his own statement of his case: and even to make that case a handle against the Church, and a fresh occasion of bitter and uncharitable accusations? And not only so, but it is also evident that hereby the great end of Discipline, which is to bring the offending party to repentance, (1 Cor. v. 3—5.) will be most effectually frustrated; and the surest means are thus used to harden the man in sin! Under such circumstances, nothing, or worse than nothing, is to be expected from any thing like the severity of Discipline: it only remains that we should endeavour to win the offender by gentleness and love in our treatment of him, and to show him his danger by faithful Preaching, and such admonition as is strictly private. I know not what more can be done, under present circumstances; except in the case of open scandals; which I have already spoken of as coming under the head of the first elements of Discipline. For *these* our Church has evidently provided, in the Rubrics before the Communion Service. And, whatever we might concede to you, as to the

desirableness of a stricter Discipline, the vast extent to which schism and Dissent prevail at present, must, in all ordinary cases, effectually preclude the *possibility* of it.

Is it fair that when Dissent and schism so greatly increase the difficulties in the way of her administration, the Church of England should be censured as she is, by the very persons who throw some of the greatest difficulties in her way, on account of defects and imperfections which, some of them at least, are mainly to be ascribed to the conduct of her enemies? Does it not behove you, as an honest man and a Christian, to search out and confess, how far *you yourself* are guilty in this matter? And this can only be understood, by considering what the combined efforts of all who have rashly deserted the Church of England might have ere now effected, to correct or prevent *real* abuses, had they only persevered in zealous attachment to the Church, and in the diligent use of all truly Scriptural means.

2. Here then I may suitably turn to those *who are hesitating about leaving the Church*; though, perhaps, to them I need not say much, as this whole volume is published, principally with a design to answer the difficulties and objections with which their minds are harassed and perplexed. I am well aware that truly upright and pious persons may be greatly distressed by some of the charges and objections which are brought against our Church; and on account of

abuses in practice and administration, which I do not attempt to deny, because I know that all things under the sun are liable to them, and will be, till a brighter period shall dawn, than has ever yet been known in the History of the Church. Now, to leave the Church at once, seems *a very short and easy way* of escaping from all such perplexity and distress; and many are tempted very strongly to do so: the rather because it is a common device of the enemies of all established Governments, whether in Church or State, to impute all the evils which are discoverable to the peculiar constitution and existing Government thereof. It might be well for you to consider, before we proceed any further, what the excellent Hooker so clearly points out in regard to those who assailed our Church in his time.

'The method of winning the people's affection unto a general liking of the cause, hath beene this: First, in the hearing of the multitude, the faults, (especially of higher callings,) are ripped up with marvellous exceeding severitie and sharpnesse of reproofe; which being oftentimes done, begetteth a great good opinion of integrity, zeal, and holinesse to such constant Reproovers of sinne, as, by likelyhood, would never be so much offended at that which i evil, unlesse themselves were singularly good. The next thing hereunto is, *to impute all faults and corruptions wherewith the world aboundeth, unto the kind of Ecclesiastical Governement established.* Wherein, as

before by reprooving faults, they purchased unto themselves with the multitude a name to be vertuous ; so by finding out this kind of cause, they obtaine to be judged wise above others. *Whereas in truth unto the forme even of Jewish Governement, which the Lord himself (they all confess) did establish, with like shew of reason they might impute those faults which the Prophets condemne in the Governours of that Common-wealth ; as to the English kind of Regiment Ecclesiastical (whereof also God himselfe) though in other sort is Authour) the staines and blemishes found in our state ; which, springing fro the roote of human frailtie and corruption, not only are, but have beene always more or lesse, yea, and (for any thing we know to the contrarie) will be till the world's end complained of, what form of Governement soever take place.* Having gotten thus much sway in the hearts of men, a third step is, *to propose their owne forme of Church Government, as the only soveraigne remedie of all evils ; and to adorne it with all the glorious titles that may be.* And the nature, as of men that have sicke bodies, so likewise of the people in the crazednesse of their minds possesst with dislike and discontentment at things present, is to imagine that any thinge (the vertue whereof they heare commended) would helpe them ; but that most which they least have tried.'

I need not proceed. Is there not real knowledge of mankind in this passage ? Is not *this* very much the conduct of those who are now persuading *you* to leave the Church ? Are not the false principles *here*

pointed out, at work *in your own mind*? How strange that even when men strenuously maintain the Doctrine of human corruption, that “man is *very far gone* (*quam longissime distet*) from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil (*ad malum propendeat*)” they should be so very hard to convince, that the evils and abuses which abound on every side, are not to be ascribed to any particular system or form of Government, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical; but grow up naturally, under every possible form of Government, from the corrupt soil of man’s depraved heart! (See Mark vii. 20—23, and Gal. v. 19—21.) You will grant, I presume, that the Church of Corinth was not only planted by the Apostle Paul, but that the form of Government *there* introduced was truly Apostolic, and therefore of Divine institution. Yet read the two Epistles to the Corinthians. Is it not evident that *very gross and awful abuses* existed in *that* Church? some of them so gross that they would not be endured in any Congregation in the Church of England, nor even in this Country? (See 1 Cor. v. 1, 2, and xi. 20—22.) And the Apostle himself was evidently constrained to use all his influence, in the way of wisdom, of love, and of authority, to rectify the abuses which, even in his own days, and within a few years of the time when he himself had preached among them with such an abundant blessing, had not only crept into that Church, but had grown great and monstrous!

Do I say this to defend or extenuate abuses? By

no means. But "to remind you that, instead of harshly and proudly censuring the Church of England, on account of abuses that prevail, it behoves you rather to humble yourself in the dust, confessing and bewailing the sinfulness and corruption of our fallen race; and to cultivate the spirit which is so affectingly recommended to us, Titus iii. 1—3.

But *your Conscience* is burdened? and your mind is harassed and distressed with so many objections against the Church of England, that you can have no peace till you leave it? You look upon yourself as committing sin, or at least as conniving at and countenancing it, so long as you continue in Communion with her? Is a man called upon to act against his Conscience?

Stop a little. All this *seems* to be very weighty and imposing. But let me ask you, How long have *you* paid any serious attention to the subject of Religion? Is it only *two or three years*, or only *two or three months*, since you were utterly careless and ignorant on the subject, and your whole heart and mind were given to the cares and business, or to the vanities and pleasures of the world? You have been awakened, within some such period perhaps, from a deadly slumber of ignorance and indifference, and have learned a great deal which you never so much as seriously thought of before. But has your mind yet attained to that calmness and composure, to that extent of information, or that sobriety of judge-

ment, which can warrant *you* in pronouncing and deciding upon a question so extensive and so important, as that of the Government and Discipline of the Church of Christ? Can you yet distinguish between the sober decisions of an *enlightened Conscience*, and the feverish scruples of one that is *weak and diseased*? Can you distinguish between *the solemn convictions of sin*, which may be ascribed to the influence of that Comforter, whose Office it is to "reprove the world of sin." (John xvi. 8.) and *the mere siftings of Satan*, who would keep you from the discovery of your real case and danger as much as possible, by harassing your mind with frivolous doubts and questionings about things which (at present) it would be your wisdom to let alone? To engage both Ministers and people in fierce and bitter disputes about Church Government, was Satan's grand device to stop the progress of the glorious and blessed Reformation in this Country, and in Europe at large. He uses still the same device, to hinder the progress of pure and undefiled religion in the souls of thousands. Is he not doing this, with regard to *your soul* at this moment? Take heed that you do not "give place to the devil." (Eph. iv. 27.) Believe me, you will best consult the real welfare of your soul, by resolving not even to think of leaving the Church, till you have given her, fairly and willingly, a seven years trial, by a diligent attendance upon all her ordinances, and an earnest endeavour to obtain from them

all the spiritual benefit you can. If *then* you are disposed to enter upon the question of Church Government, and the dispute respecting Conformity and Non-Conformity, you will (it may be hoped) be somewhat better prepared for it than you can be at present.

But, perhaps you will say, *you* are placed under very painful circumstances. In your Parish Church *the Gospel is not preached*: neither is there, in your neighbourhood, any place of worship connected with the Establishment, in which you and your family can hear the glad tidings of salvation faithfully proclaimed: and you think that nothing can compensate the want of such faithful preaching.

For this complaint it is possible enough that there may be some ground: for an eminent prelate of our Church (Abp. Secker,) pointed out long ago, in a Charge delivered to his Clergy, that Ministers of the Church of England had lost many of their people to Sectaries, by a mode of preaching not sufficiently Evangelical: and Bp. Horsley, in his Charges, has also pointed out, that too many of the Clergy were so much afraid of anything like Calvinism, as to throw into the shade the great Doctrines of our common Christianity. A great improvement has taken place since then: but (as might be expected in so large a sphere) the improvement has gone on at a very different rate, in different places and districts. But supposing you to be placed, like the Christian Sister

to whom the foregoing letters are addressed, under the *most* unsavourable circumstances. Are there not two very important questions to be considered?

(1.) If the evil could be avoided, as far as regards yourself and your family, by leaving the Church and joining the Dissenters, What is likely to be the result with regard to the Clergyman and the Congregation you forsake? He seems to you to be a mere worldly man, and quite ignorant of the Gospel! If it be so—what is likely to be the effect upon *his* mind, if, as soon as you are brought to deep and serious views of Religion, he sees that you begin to turn your back upon him and upon the Church? What *could* be more calculated to prejudice his mind against serious and vital Religion? What *could* give a better handle, to represent the principles of true Religion (which you, I will suppose, have embraced) as contrary to the Principles of the Church of England? and if you give him a handle to say this, what can be more likely to injure the whole Congregation, and to prejudice them against all serious Religion more and more?

If, on the contrary, as your views of Religion become more deep and clear, he finds that your attachment to the Church increases;—that you become more kind and respectful in your conduct towards himself;—that you are more earnestly desirous of getting all the good you can from the Ordinances of the Church;—and that you are more willing to assist

him in every good work to which he is disposed—
—(in his schools, for example, and in administering to
the wants of the sick and poor):—if, in short, he
plainly sees that in every respect, as you become
a better Christian, you also become (as, beyond all
doubt and question, assuredly you ought to do) *a
better Churchman and a better Parishioner*:—is not
this, of all means under heaven which you can pos-
sibly use, the most likely (under God's blessing) to
lead him to a favourable consideration of those prin-
ciples which make you so?

I am supposing the case, in which you have nothing
directly to object to the Clergyman, but simply this,
that he does not preach the Gospel. If there be *more
than this* to be complained of—if his conduct should
be immoral—if he neglects his Clerical duties—if he
preaches anything *contrary* to the Articles, Homilies,
and Liturgy of the Church of England,—you either
know, or ought to know, that such things ought to
be, in a plain, straight forward, manly manner,
represented to his Diocesan: not by anonymous, or
incorrect, or intemperate letters ;—but in such a
calm, Christian, and gentlemanlike manner, as may
plainly shew that you have nothing but the interest
of true Religion, and of the Church of England, at
heart. Before you even *think* of leaving the Church,
you ought to be *very sure* that you have done every
thing in your power, according to the principles
of that Church, to remedy the evils of which you

complain. But I have already endeavoured to point out how wrong it is, on account of defects which you perceive, to leave the Church (p. 33—36), and what evil consequences must inevitably follow,—even in the worst case which can be well supposed, and that which seems at first to supply the strongest reasons for so doing.

(2) But there is another very important point for you to consider. You say that the Gospel is not preached in *your Parish Church*, and therefore you must go to the *Dissenting Chapel*. *Are you sure the Gospel is preached there?* I will suppose that it is *not* a Chapel in which open *heresy* is preached; but one of those in which they *profess* to preach the Gospel, and which is commonly accounted *Orthodox*. Now then, it behoves you very seriously to enquire, *first*, How much of the truth of the Gospel is actually proclaimed in the Ordinances of the *Parish Church*, including the Prayers, the Sacraments, and the Preaching? and then, How much of the truth of the Gospel is actually proclaimed in the Ordinances of the *Chapel*, taken also in their whole extent? *In the Parish Church* you have at least the *Liturgy*, which is full of the purest and soundest Evangelical instruction; and you have *large portions of the Holy Scriptures* regularly read. You have the *Services for certain solemn Seasons* to remind you, with peculiar force, of several great and fundamental Doctrines. And does not your Minister (amidst all his alleged defi-

ciencies,—which I will not deny or extenuate) preach a sound doctrinal Sermon, or two, on the Incarnation *at Christmas*, on the Atonement *on Good Friday*, on the Resurrection *at Easter*, on the gifts and operations, the Deity and Personality of the Holy Ghost, *at Whitsuntide*, and on the Trinity *on Trinity Sunday*? These Sermons, you perhaps will say, are dry and cold. That is possible enough:—but is not the Doctrine *sound*? Is not the statement, so far as it goes, *orthodox and unexceptionable*? Moreover, at other times, must you not allow, that on all the Doctrines to which I have alluded, he really preaches sound Doctrine? and that, on *these* great and fundamental points, he *never* preaches any thing which has any tendency to beguile or mislead you? On the contrary, in the Dissenting Chapel—(unless the Minister be a particularly sound and sober-minded man)—*the whole* of that instruction, which is conveyed by our Liturgy in such a beautiful and affecting manner, will be entirely wanting; and poor stuff indeed it is that you will have in the place of it: and (let the Minister be who he will) you will assuredly have nothing which, either for Evangelical Instruction or Spiritual Devotion, can be compared with our Liturgy. Then perhaps *one Chapter* from the Scriptures will be read, and that (*very commonly*) not judiciously selected, so as, by any means, to bring the various parts of Scripture fairly before you in the course of the year. The

Minister then preaches ; and gives you, perhaps, what seems in the main to be sound and Scriptural, on the Doctrines of Human Corruption, Regeneration, Justification by Faith, and Salvation by Grace alone. But what sort of instruction does he give on the Doctrine of the Trinity, and those which are immediately connected with it? Does he give *any* or *none*? If he gives *any*, is it really *clear*, *sound*, and *full*? without shrinking from, or disguising, or gainsaying, any part of the Orthodox Faith ? Then as to the Doctrines of Election and Predestination,—what with the harsh, dogmatical, extravagant, and even revolting statements of some who are reckoned *very high* in doctrine,—and the ignorant misrepresentation and direct denial of these doctrines by others who are considered (and justly enough) *very low*—is not all the evangelical sweetness and consolation of these Doctrines (as stated in our XVIIth Article) entirely set aside ? So that after all, when you have separated from the Church, and done all the injury to yourself and others, which is inevitably connected with that step,—when you have done too surely *much* evil, and run the risk of I know not how much more,—for the sake of hearing the Gospel preached, it is very highly probable that you may not hear *the Gospel* after all ; but have made a change, which (on a due consideration of *all* circumstances) even in respect of Evangelical Instruction (for the sake of which you made it) is greatly for the worse.

I say not this with any design or wish whatsoever to speak unkindly, or to act an unfriendly part, towards those Dissenting Ministers who do *faithfully* and *fully* preach the Gospel: nay—I can make allowances for the great difficulties under which many of them are placed, who really do desire and endeavour to declare “the whole counsel of God.” But two things I know—*first*, that the system of Dissent opposes immense difficulties in the way of a Minister who really desires to do so; and *next*, that it is no easy matter to distinguish between those Dissenting Ministers who are really sound and upright, and those who are only specious pretenders to the name of Orthodox and Evangelical; while, in reality, their deflections from the simplicity and purity of the Gospel, on the one hand or the other, are subtle and endless, and most fearful and dangerous. So that when you think yourself to be justified in leaving the Church, for the sake of hearing the Gospel, it behoves you to be far more careful what you are about, than you seem to have the slightest notion of. And the strong probability is, that (all things being duly considered) you will have reason to conclude that you are *much safer* where you are. And the only safe way of mending matters (when you have really much to lament) is this—to wait upon God in humble earnest prayer,—in diligent searching of the Scriptures, and of the Authoritative Writings of the Church,—and in the careful and diligent discharge

of all the duties of the station in which you are placed, till the Lord shall send you help.

If, however, your main objection be the want of Discipline, in addition to what I have said in the preceding letters, I would only intreat you to consider, Which is most likely to injure and ensnare the souls of men,—the plan of open Communion generally adopted in the Church of England, which leaves all the work of examination, and all the responsibility connected with it, upon the head of the individual who comes to the Lord's Table; or that which is attempted in Dissenting Congregations, but cannot possibly be realised in practice? for they profess to receive none but real believers at the Table of the Lord. Therefore every one must be examined by the Minister, or the Deacons, or the Church at large (none of whom, it is evident, can search the heart): and after this examination he is received and acknowledged by 'the Church,' as a truly converted man, and a real Believer. Is he not likely to rest in this? Is he not likely, just in proportion as he needs severe and searching *self-examination*, (1 Cor. xi. 28, and 2 Cor. xiii. 5) to neglect this solemn duty, and to 'lay the flattering unction to his soul,' that having been so solemnly acknowledged by 'the Church' as a true Believer, he must needs be safe? And does not all this tend to nourish in his soul a dangerous and even fatal security? If we know anything of the deceitfulness of the heart of man, must we not clearly

see that scarce anything can be more calculated to lull a man into the most awful delusion, than the notion that because he is in full communion with a visible Church, he therefore must be a child of God, and have a right and title to consider himself as such. And let me further ask, Is there not something of *the essence of Popery* in this very notion? and that utter forgetfulness of the distinction between *the Visible Church* and *the Invisible*, which is one of the most dangerous errors of the Romish Apostacy? The Sacraments belong to the Members of the *Visible Church*. To know whether you belong to the *Invisible*, you must obey the Apostolic injunction; “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.*” And if you need a Scriptural series of Tests by which you may examine yourself, I need only refer you to the first Epistle of John. A wise and faithful Minister may greatly *assist* you therein: but the burden and the responsibility must rest *upon yourself*. If, instead of using Scriptural means *to satisfy yourself* on this point, your object is *to satisfy others*, a door is opened at once to awful hypocrisy and fatal delusion. And does not the pretence of strict Discipline, which is kept up in Dissenting Congregations, *tend directly to open such a door?*

(3.) But lastly, I wish to address a few words to those *who profess themselves to be attached and faithful Friends and Members of the Church of*

England. And certainly to those *who really are such*, I cannot address myself but with peculiar feelings of cordial regard and affection—even though personally unknown to them. And I have reason to hope that all such will receive this little volume, notwithstanding all its defects and imperfections, with feelings of kindness, and read it with attention and candour. But can I hope that all who make this profession are *really* such? I desire, my dear Reader, to address you in the kindest manner. But, while I do so, I must remind you, that we live in such perilous and awful times, that it will not avail in the least to take up *lightly* a profession of attachment to the Church of England. Our attachment and devotion to her may be put, before long, to very severe trials. Now then, the first thing to be feared is, *the Want of Information*. Are you really sufficiently acquainted with the principles of the Church of England, as set forth in her Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies, and in the writings of her Fathers, Reformers, and ablest Champions, to be, *in such times as these*, and in such manner and degree as these times require, *a firm devoted Friend to the Church of England?* I have endeavoured to defend the Church of England in the foregoing letters on the very principles of her Fathers, Reformers, and Martyrs. Yet perhaps some will say, ‘I do not think these are the real Principles of the Church of England. I take a very different view of them.’ If so, my

dear Reader, either you or I must be greatly mistaken: and who shall decide between us? I answer, *the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of our Church*; (*and if you will go further*) *the other extant writings of those who drew them up*. I however, do not desire to go any further: I am satisfied with those authoritative writings. You perhaps will say, ‘But then different persons take such very different views of the meaning of the Articles, &c! Different persons explain them so differently, that they decide nothing.’

Pardon me: I am thoroughly persuaded that *they decide everything* which can really serve to ascertain the true and faithful Members of the Church of England. The same thing (I need not tell you) is said by Infidels and Semi-infidels respecting the Holy Scriptures, — that they are explained in totally different ways by different persons: *therefore they decide nothing*. To which I answer, That the Divine Author of the Scriptures is perfectly sincere and upright in all that He has caused to be “written for our learning.” The real meaning of Him, who is indeed sincere and upright, and with whom it is impossible to lie, (Heb. vi. 18.) is not so easily mistaken, by those who are themselves upright and sincere, and really desirous to know it. The difficulty arises from *our own insincerity and inattention*. Something similar I would say, respecting the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England. Those who compiled them were truly honest men; and as honest men they

wrote. It is not difficult for one really honest man to understand another. When therefore we read and study the Articles, let us not be enquiring, *What sense can we put upon all these?* or, *How can I explain this, so as to reconcile it with my pre-conceived opinions?* but simply let us consider, *If any honest man said this to me, what should I understand by it?* *What should I think that he meant?* Let us read the Articles, &c. upon this principle, and *all difficulties as to the real meaning of them will vanish.* And even if the meaning of the Articles themselves were not sufficiently plain, those who drew them up, and originally subscribed them, have left us whole volumes besides, which leave not the slightest room for doubt as to their real meaning. The difficulty, with respect to *all* writings which we are called upon to subscribe to, arises from this, that the plain, “literal and grammatical sense” is a sense which many persons do not exactly like; and therefore they begin to cast about in their minds, whether they cannot draw the words aside a little, this way or that, so as to make them *appear at least* to bear a different construction, more agreeable to their own wishes and notions. These artifices are tried *first and most of all* upon the *Scriptures* themselves,—because *they* are the final standard, from which there is no appeal, and speak to us with unquestionable authority: we *must* submit to that sense which we acknowledge them to bear. But in proportion as

other writings (which, in subjection to the Scriptures, claim authority among those who receive them)—are really and truly Scriptural, they are assailed and drawn aside and wrested in the same manner. The Articles of the Church of England have not escaped this kind of perversion. But is this honest? Could you endure to have *your own* words thus twisted and wrested? If any one should thus put a sense upon them, quite beside the plain, literal meaning, and say, ‘You mean so and so,’—should you not indignantly answer, ‘*I mean what I said?*’

Now this is a very important point to be considered in studying both the Scriptures themselves, and our Articles as founded upon them. *They mean what they say.* They are not vague and dubious, like the words of one who is desirous to deceive and ensnare; but clear and distinct, being those of honest men. And may we not with all right and reason expect, that those who subscribe and acknowledge them should be honest too? And that what they write, and speak, and preach, on the subject of Religion, should really and fully accord with the plain meaning of the Articles they subscribe or acknowledge? If you profess yourself a member of the Church of England, have you ever really *studied* the Articles, the Liturgy, and the Homilies of that Church, and examined yourself thereby, so as to ascertain, whether you are indeed a true and faithful member thereof? I write to you, as to one

who really desires to be so. But I must remind you, that there are some who profess to be very High Churchmen in the present day, who make no scruple whatever of throwing *the Homilies* overboard at once ; and are greatly annoyed if anything is quoted from *them*, and urged on their attention with authority. These, I say, are no Churchmen at all, but mere pretenders to the name. They are not even *honest men* : for they have solemnly subscribed the thirty-fifth Article ; but it is plain that they will not stand to it. Others appear not much to care even about *the Articles* ;—at least, if we may judge by comparing their printed Sermons therewith. All their Churchmanship seems to consist in a very strong attachment to *the Liturgy*, external forms and endowments of the Church,—and *some* of the Canons.¹ But if *the Articles and Homilies* are neglected, undervalued, or misunderstood and misrepresented, is there not reason to fear that this is a very blind attachment ? For the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies form one harmonious whole ; and he who does not understand this, and love them *all* accordingly, cannot really understand, or enter into, any one of the three. More especially, those who set aside,

¹ *Some* of those, who seem in some respects to be zealous for the strict enforcement of the Canons, appear to have entirely overlooked the seventy-fifth. It is no favourite with them. And I might say the same of the fifty-ninth.

or explain away, or undervalue, *the Articles of the Church*, have plainly given up *her fundamental principles* ;—even those which constitute her a *Protestant Church*, and set her in decided opposition to the Church of Rome: without which she could never have existed. Her own authoritative declaration is, that *Traditions and Ceremonies*, “at all times have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of Countries, Times, and Men's Manners; so that nothing be ordained against God's Word.” (Art. xxxiv.) But *her Articles* contain and set forth *immutable Truth*, drawn from God's own *Word*; and therefore (like unto that Word) the same in all Countries, at all Times, and under all Circumstances. For any one to set up his private judgement in opposition to *her Liturgy, Ceremonies, Traditions, and established Order*, may be justly condemned as *Schism*. But to dissent from, or oppose, *her Articles and Doctrines*, is a much more awful sin: it is *Heresy*. And those who are very scrupulous and punctilious about *her external Forms and Ceremonies*, but careless and negligent as to *her Doctrines*, do indeed “strain at a gnat and swallow a Camel.” They are like unto those, to whom our Saviour said: “Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matt. xxiii. 23.) Another class seem to be much better acquainted

with *the Articles and Homilies*, and endeavour, in the main, to preach accordingly,—as if they really understood and valued them ;—and are attached to the Church of England, on account of the Scriptural and soul-saving Doctrines which she maintains. This certainly *ought* to be the first and principal ground of our attachment: and so far is well. But they evidently care very little about *the Liturgy* and *the Ecclesiastical Polity of our Church*: nay—some of them are proposing alterations and reforms, with an eagerness which must needs be very pleasing to the enemies of the Church. Now, with reference merely to the Doctrines which they maintain, I can cordially unite with such as *Christians* ;—as I could with the faithful Members of *the Kirk of Scotland*, or of any of *the Reformed Churches abroad* ;—which all maintain the same Scriptural and Protestant Doctrines, and have acknowledged one another all along as Sister Churches, and genuine Daughters of the Reformation. But these persons, though I believe them to be *good Christians* in the main, are in fact *no Churchmen* at all: and this I must be allowed very deeply to lament. The rather because, being in communion with the Church of England, and professing to love and reverence her upon the best and purest grounds, it behoves *them*, beyond all others, to shew a conscientious regard to *her whole Constitution and all her external forms*, and to be patterns and examples unto all men of punctual

attention to *Ecclesiastical Order and Discipline*: otherwise they must needs cause their good to be evil spoken of, and throw hinderances in the way of those, whom above all others they should endeavour to win and conciliate;—so as to lead them to study and embrace those Doctrinal views, which they either ignorantly neglect, or (in some cases) are greatly prejudiced against. The position that such persons hold with regard to the Church of England is (I must confess) to my mind far from consistent with that uprightness and conscientiousness, which we are warranted to expect in those who are so zealous for the Truth of Scripture.

I cannot therefore neglect this opportunity of stating, that I was deeply grieved, when I found that many, whom I really believe to be good men, were uniting together to form a Society, which (while it professed to be an "*Established Church Society*" formed for the *Defence* of the Church of England) appeared in fact to be designed, partly *to defend* and partly *to reform*;—thus mingling and confounding together *two* objects, which ought to be kept entirely distinct;—and *one* of which would find sufficient employment for one Society. After consulting with one or two friends, decided Churchmen like myself, I therefore took the liberty of representing to a Meeting convened for the formation of that Society (and here again I gladly take the opportunity of saying the same things *more publicly*) the

nothing could be more impolitic than (under present circumstances) to mingle the questions of Defence and Reform.¹ Nor could anything be more *needless* ; for, when the present attacks upon the Church of England commenced, that Church was already, in every important respect, in an improving state ; and in none more remarkably than in that which had long been its greatest defect—the neglect of providing Church accommodation, and an efficient Ministry to meet the wants of an increasing population. *The Society for Building and Enlarging Churches* has already done great things in this way (though still immensely more remains to be done.) And measures were also in operation which tended (perhaps too slowly and partially) but actually tended in a measure, to secure the residence of an efficient Clergy. The number of faithful and diligent Clergymen was increasing on every side ; and this under an influence which was evidently from on high. It would therefore be quite enough for us to ward off the present attacks: and then we might assuredly trust, that real improvement would go on with accelerated speed. Besides which, such a Society, by once admitting the question of Church Reform, had taken into its bosom an element of discord : for two persons could scarcely be found, who

¹ See an able Letter on this subject in *The Western Watchman*. No. ii. p. 57.

agreed as to what Reforms were desirable and what not.—And so, I believe, it proved: for I have heard nothing more of the proposed Society, except that it was engaged in interminable discussions on this very point.

A Society simply *to defend the Church*, and that upon *real Church of England principles*, might be very useful at present. But when persons, who propose to form a Society “for Strengthening the Church,” can say of her Articles and Liturgy no more than this: “With respect, then, to these Formularies, it is to be understood, that, so far as this Society is concerned, attempts to effect any alteration in them *will not receive its support*”!!—(which amounts, I think, to this: The garrison, which has undertaken to defend a beleaguered city, puts forth a proclamation to this effect: “If the enemy attack *the Citadel*, we shall not assist them”!!)—may we not hereupon expect a valiant and strenuous defence? Truly if a man is not fully prepared to stand by the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England *as they are*;—if he is not fully resolved to resist every attempt to touch them:—I know not how to consider him as a Churchman, or (under present circumstances) a friend of the Church, at all. For, supposing the objections started to have forty-fold more weight than any that I have yet seen or heard of, is *this* a time to think of alterations? Cannot an considerate person, see, with half an eye, tha

alterations now made would assuredly be for the worse? and would certainly tend to lower the standard, both of doctrine and devotion, which has been set before us by the Fathers of our Church ? O where are the men to be found at present, who in any respect are fit to lay a finger on *their work* ? This, I am sure, is abundantly evident, that those who propose alterations and improvements, are the men least qualified to interfere.'

' We have reason not unfrequently to cry out, " Defend us from our Defenders, and save us from our friends ! "—For, not unfrequently, our injudicious defenders, and our false, half-hearted friends, prove indeed our most dangerous enemies. And, among the false and dangerous friends of the Church of England, I here take occasion to mention the *Record Newspaper* ;—which indeed writes strongly on the general Principle of an Establishment, and exposes some of the iniquitous proceedings of modern Dissenters: but when it touches on the peculiarities of the Church of England, as distinguished from other Protestant Churches, it *never* does her justice ; and lately has begun to attack her Creeds and fundamental Doctrines. See some Remarks of the Editor on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, in the Record for Nov. 17th ; in which the *Eternal Generation* of the Son is directly denied, and the Nicene Creed attacked and condemned. It may be that all this is to be lightly passed over, as a foolish crotchet of one whose mind is none of the soundest : for (strange to say !) the *Eternal Sonship* is *maintained*, and

We are called upon to buckle on our armour *to defend the Church*. Let those who are true-hearted

the Eternal Generation of the Son denied ! ! ! But, however that may be, Members of the Church of England have a right to enquire, *Who* this Editor is ? And *What* he is ? That he is not a faithful and consistent Member of the Church of England is but too apparent; nor do I suppose that it was ever suspected. But he was commonly supposed to be (originally at least) a Member of the Kirk of Scotland ; and *as such* some confidence was reposed in him. But the Kirk of Scotland, though it does not expressly receive the Nicene Creed, is completely in unison with the Church of England as to this doctrine. The Confession says, (Chap. ii. § iii.) “ The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding ; *the Son is eternally begotten of the Father* ; the Holy Ghost *eternally proceeding* from the Father and the Son.” And the Larger Catechism states the same Doctrine thus—(*Ans. to Quest. 10.*) “ It is proper to the Father *to beget the Son*, and *to the Son to be begotten of the Father*, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son, *from all eternity*.” Who then is this writer, who defends Establishments, yet is neither a faithful member of the Church of England, nor of the Kirk of Scotland ; but directly attacks doctrines on which both are fully agreed ?

It is not *here* the time or place to enter into the proof or statement at large of the Doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son, or the refutation of what has been advanced against it : that I must reserve for a larger and more important w

do so in good earnest. And for the love that we bear, or ought to bear, to our dear and venerable Mother, let us hear nothing of alteration or reformation of

which I have been long preparing. But, in the mean time, as the discussion in the Record arose out of a reference to Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary, it is but justice to the question, and to the Society of which that learned man was a member, to refer to the able refutation of his views, contained in the "Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ: in a Letter to a Friend. By Richard Watson." 8vo. London 1818. (Second Edition): which I do the rather, because Mr. Watson was a member of the same Society as Dr. Clarke. The Editor of the Record goes, it may be said, only half way with Dr. Clarke: nevertheless he may study Mr. Watson's book with great advantage;—as also Bishop Bull on 'The Opinion of the Catholic Church for the first three Centuries, on the Necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God.'

But I mention this subject here, because it is an awful and lamentable circumstance, that one, *who comes before the public as a friend and defender of the Church of England*, should thus maintain downright heresy, and go about to unsettle the minds of men on such a subject. Whence the unlearned and unstable will be but too apt to conclude, that there is nothing settled in Theology,—no point on which the Truth has yet been fully and finally ascertained. How readily this notion leads the minds of some to a sort of universal Scepticism, we sometimes see piteous examples. Against such *friends* of the Church it is more necessary to raise the voice of warning, than against her avowed *enemies*.

that kind, in such a time as this. *For myself* I am disposed to go much further. Some good men are anxious that certain reforms should take place, *in regard to temporalities and mere external administration* :—and would have the Legislature interfere as to Sinecures, Pluralities, Non-residence, and the like. Even here, I am not myself disposed to stir one finger. If, in the ways of Providence, any plans of alteration should be brought forward, in regard to *these* things, I can quietly leave them entirely to those, who think it their business to interfere: it is no concern of mine: I have, I trust, something far more important to attend to. The only reform which I desire, or care about, is such as begins *in the closet*, and manifests itself *in our pastoral ministrations, public and private*. For this kind of reformation I do fervently long and pray. O that every *Member*, and especially every *Minister*, of the Church of England, might be stirred up to enter more frequently *into his closet*! to wrestle with the Lord (Gen. xxxii. 24—30) in more humble, earnest, persevering prayer; and with such prayer to search the Scriptures more diligently, to examine more carefully the authoritative writings and formularies of our Church; to compare these with the works of her Fathers, Reformers, and Martyrs! O that each and every one might be disposed and enabled to set the standard and examples of these holy men before him,—doctrinal, devotional, and practical,—and to drink into, and exemplify,

the spirit which was manifest in *them*? O that the fruits of all this *closet work* might become more evident from Sabbath to Sabbath, in the unction and earnestness of our preaching—in the faithfulness and affection of our admonitions, public and private! *This* is the reformation which I need myself. *This* is the reformation which I desire to see and hear of in all my brethren. I care not the shadow of a straw for any other. When this kind of reformation really takes place, those persons who have *Station, Authority, wealth and influence* in the Church, will conscientiously improve the talents with which God has entrusted them, as those that must give account in the great day of Judgement. Those who hold *Pluralities* will, either themselves give them up, or be more careful to promote the spiritual edification of the several Parishes committed to their care, by providing such Curates as they are satisfied are better qualified to discharge every part of a Minister's duty than themselves. Those who have *Sinecures* will take occasion to give gratuitous help to their needy brethren, and to poor and neglected neighbourhoods: or will employ their talents in writing books of piety, learning, and research—for which the parochial Clergy have no time. Those who have *Livings in their gift*, will not make them matters of bargain and sale, nor merely means of providing for relatives: but they will conscientiously *seek out* the Ministers who are best qualified to take the pastoral charge of the people. And those

who have *rich Livings* will readily augment those of their poorer brethren; and thus equalize the distribution of Church property in the best possible manner. I might go on to multiply instances, but these will suffice. *Such reformation will be real*: but that which arises from Legislative interference, it must be feared, will rather change the form of evil, and make it more specious, than effect any real good.

Does any one wish for a better guide and director in this kind of reformation, than the poor, unworthy writer of these pages? *Let me then recommend you at once to the judicious Hooker.* It will be granted, I presume, on all hands, that *that great and good man really understood the Doctrines, and the whole spirit and Constitution of the Church of England.* Are you aware that, besides his invaluable work on Ecclesiastical Polity, he has left behind him 'A learned Discourse on Justification, Works, and how the Foundation of Faith is overthrown,' and 'Five learned Sermons,' which are well worthy of your most attentive perusal and your deepest study. If you are a Minister of the Church of England, *to these I more especially direct you.* There will you find my views of some important Doctrines, set forth far more clearly, fully, and sweetly, than I am able to set them forth myself. And with a quotation from one of them I will sum up and enforce what I have said above in regard to *closet reformation*,—or that which is indeed inward, per-

sonal, and spiritual in the first instance ; and will therefore, in due season, extend its blessed influence far and wide. It is addressed, in the first instance, to the Clergy, and he says :

'If there bee any feeling of Christ, and drop of heavenly dew, or any sparkes of God's good Spirit within you, stirre it up ; be careful to build and edifie, first yourselves, and then your flocks, in this most holy faith.'

'I say, first yourselves ; For hee which will set the hearts of other men on fire, with the love of Christ, must himselfe burne with love. It is want of faith in ourselves, my Brethren, which maketh us retchlesse in building others : Wee forsake the Lord's inheritance, and feed it not. What is the reason of this ? Our owne desires are settled where they should not bee. Wee ourselves are like those women which have a longing to eat coales, and lime, and filth ; wee are fed, some with honour, some with ease, some with wealth ; the Gospell waxeth lothsome and unpleasant in our taste ; how should wee then have a care to feed others with that, which we cannot fancie ourselves ? If faith waxe cold, and slender, in the heart of the Prophet, it will soone perish from the eares of the people. The Prophet Amos speaketh of a famine, saying, " I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord. Men shall wander from sea to sea, and from the North unto the East shall they

runne to and fro, to seeke the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it." "Judgement must beginne at the house of God," sayth Peter. Yea, I say, at the Sanctuarie of God this judgement must beginne. This famine must beginne at the heart of the Prophet. Hee must have darknesse for a vision, hee must stumble at noone dayes, as at the twi-light, and then truth shall fall in the middest of the streets, then shall the people wander from sea to sea, and from the North unto the East shall they runne to and fro, to seeke the Word of the Lord.

'In the second of Haggai, "Speake now," sayth God to his Prophet, "Speake now to Zerubbabel the Sonne of Shealtiel, Prince of Judah, and to Jehoshua the Sonne of Jehozadak, the High Priest, and to the residue of the People, saying, Who is left among you, that saw this house in her first glorie? and how do you see it now? Is not this House in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing?" The Prophet would have all men's eyes turned *to the view of themselves, every sort brought to the consideration of their present state.* This is no place to shew what dutie Zerubbabel or Jehoshua doth owe unto God in this respect. They have, I doubt not, such as put them hereof in remembrance. *I aske of you, which are a part of the residue of God's Elect and chosen people: Who is there amongst you, that hath taken a survey of th* of God, as it was in the dayes of the ble

ties of Jesus Christ? Who is there amongst you, that hath seene and considered this holy Temple in her first glorie? And how doe you see it now? Is it not in comparison of the other, almost as nothing, when ye look upon them that have undertaken the charge of your souls, and know how farre these are for the most part growne out of kind, how few there bee that treade the steps of their ancient Predecessors, yee are easily filled with indignation, easily drawne unto these complaints, wherein the difference of present, from former times, is bewailed, easily perswaded to thinke of them that lived to enjoy the dayes which now are gone. Surely they were happie in comparison of us that have succeeded them: were not their Bishops men unreprovable, wise, righteous, holy, temperate, well reported of, even of those which were without? Were not their Pastors, Guides, and Teachers, able and willing to exhort with wholesome doctrine, and to reprove which gaine said the Truth? Had they Priests made of the refuse of the people? Were men, like to the children which were in Nineveh, unable to discerne betweene the right hand and the left, presented to the charge of their Congregations? Did their Teachers leave their flockes over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers? Did their Prophets enter upon holy things as spoiles, without a reverend calling? Were their Leaders so unkindly affected towards them, that they could find in their

hearts to sell them as sheep or oxen, not caring how they made them away ? *But beloved, deceive not yourselves. Doe the faults of your Guides and Pastors offend you ? It is your fault if they bee thus faultie.* *Nullus qui malum Rectorem patitur, eum accuset, quia sui fuit meriti perversi Pastoris subjacere ditioni,* sayth St. Gregorie : Whosoever thou art whom the inconvenience of an evill Governour doth presse, accuse thyself, and not him. *His being such is thy deserving.* “ O ye disobedient children, turne againe, sayth the Lord, and then will I give you Pastors according to mine owne heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer. iii. 14, 15.) So that *the only way to repaire all ruines, breaches, and offensive decayes in others, is to beginne reformation at yourselves.* Which that we may all sincerely, seriously, and speedily doe, God the Father grant for his Sonne our Saviour Jesus’ sake ! unto Whom with the Holy Ghost, three Persons, one eternal and everlasting God, be honor, and glorie, and praise for ever. Amen.’

If the former part of this passage be worthy of the serious attention of Ministers, so is the latter equally worthy to be deeply studied by those, who can open their mouths wide to denounce the deficencies of *the Clergy*, but have never yet learned to humble themselves before God and man on account of *their own*. I note this, because I write upon the very same principle. Whatever is to be lamented and bewailed, I

would earnestly desire each and every man to enquire, and search out diligently, *how far he himself is guilty therein*; and thereupon to cry humbly and fervently to God for pardoning mercy, and for renewing and sanctifying grace. *This is the only way to real reformation.*

And here let me express my deep regret, that, while there is so much discussion abroad, about *defending* the Church with some, and about *reforming* the Church with others, there seems to be a sad neglect of that, which is the best beginning of all true reformation, and all availing defence: I mean *the humble confession of past short-comings, imperfections, and offences.* It was said by one of our Bishops upon his death-bed, that nothing lay so heavy upon his heart as *his Sins of Omission.* The whole body of the Church of England may justly say the same. And the higher views we take of her Constitution, the more deeply should we be affected with the consideration of the practical deficiencies and shortcomings of those to whom the administration of her blessings is committed. Let us consider the Scriptural purity of her Doctrines,—the Apostolic Ordination, Succession, and Authority of her Ministry,—the chastened fervour and spirituality of her devotional Formularies,—the vast extent of Influence, and the multiplied opportunities of diffusing her blessings, which arise from her position as the National Establishment of this mighty Empire,—and

the bright examples of her Fathers, Reformers, and Martyrs, who cemented her foundations with their blood! and *O what ought her Clergy and her Members to have been!* and *O what ought they to have done* for the glory of God, and for the welfare and salvation of the souls of men! which, yet, we must confess that they have not done! Consider the vast masses of the population of this country,—the people at her gates and under her eye,—who are in lamentable ignorance of her first principles! and, alas! thousands and tens of thousands of them *entirely destitute of church accommodation!*—so that they cannot attend upon her Services if they would. Is not this a great and crying evil? And can we wonder that these neglected multitudes have *first* deserted her, and *then* become her avowed and bitter enemies? I am not defending *them*: but verily *we ourselves* are guilty in this matter. Why was no legislative enactment devised and passed long ago, to prevent the possibility of so many tens of thousands being thus left as sheep without a shepherd? It might have been done in some such way as this—By a Law that whosoever four or five hundred new houses were built in a Parish, of more than a given population, then the builders and proprietors of those houses should be obliged also to build a Church or Chapel, capable of containing at least twelve or fifteen hundred persons;—the *in* of the Minister, and the necessary expences *in*

Church or Chapel, to be defrayed by a certain poundage on the rents of those houses. Other provisions for dividing and sub-dividing Parishes might have been connected herewith, so as not to interfere with any legal rights, or reasonable expectations of living persons: and Commissioners might have been duly appointed, to whom the plans of such Churches and Chapels might have been submitted, and with authority to see that all things were done with due regard to local circumstances. It is not for me, however, to enter into details.

Consider also the vast extent of *our Colonies and Foreign Possessions*, in which no *adequate* provision has yet been made, and alas! (in many cases, and till very lately) *no provision whatsoever*, for the Christian Instruction of Millions of the Heathen who are under British Government! O how awful to think, that in very many cases *our own countrymen* have been left destitute of the means of Grace; and the natural consequence has been, that their lives and conduct have proved a continual stumbling-block to the Heathen around them! (Rom. ii. 24.)

Consider again, what multitudes, in our own and in the Sister Island, have been left, unwarmed and unpitied, under the yoke of Papal Superstition and Idolatry! how this number is still increasing in various parts of this highly-favoured land! and how very few of our Clergy are at all prepared to maintain the Controversy with the subtle and restless

emissaries of Rome!! Here again is one of our crying and most awful sins! *The Legislative sanction of the Romish Apostasy* which we have had lately to bewail—what has it been but *the natural consequence* of the ignorance and indolence of the Clergy respecting the Romish Controversy? and the consequent want of faithful warning and instruction, from the pulpit, and in our Schools¹ and Universities, which have left even the educated portion of our people an easy prey to the all-confounding Liberalism of the Age! Our Church and our Country have been specially raised up and protected and blest, as the Pillar and Bulwark of the Protestant Cause: and herein we have lamentably failed! If there were nothing else to provoke the heaviest judgements on our Church and our Country, this alone would be sufficient.

Consider yet further, the high and holy Standard of *Ministerial Faithfulness* which is set before us in our Ordination Services, and in our Homilies: and contrast herewith the preaching of *all* ranks and

¹ See the 66th Canon: “ *Ministers to confer with Recusants.*”

² See the 79th Canon: “ *The Duty of Schoolmasters:*” wherein it is expressly said “ All Schoolmasters shall teach in English or Latin, *as the children are able to bear*, the Larger or Shorter Catechism heretofore by public authority set forth.” The *Larger or Latin Catechism*,—intended for all Schools in which Latin is taught,—is *Nowell’s* mentioned p. 163 (Note).

classes of our Clergy. I am careful to make no invidious distinctions: for my soul's desire is, that each individual should carefully *examine himself* on this important point. And must we not, *one and all*, frankly confess, that we have fallen, and yet do fall, very far below this Standard? and that we have reason, as individuals, and as a collective body, to be humbled in the dust, when we compare our own preaching and ministrations with the Standards which our Church has set before us?

Once more—let us consider the great and important *Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*, in which we were fairly warranted to look for the concentration of the wisdom and energy of the Clergy and Members of our Church, in devising and adopting means for the most extensive diffusion of the blessings of Scriptural and Evangelical Instruction, into every part of the British Empire, at home and abroad. Here was a vast and organized machinery for supplying *at home*, in some measure at least, the deficiency of Church accommodation and Pastoral Care, in neighbourhoods in which the population had outgrown the regular provision for parochial instruction; and indeed for meeting various exigencies that arose from time to time. What might such a Society not have done, for the diffusion of the knowledge of *the true principles of the Church*, by means of cheap publications? I will not here enter upon the enquiry, how far the Tracts actually pub-

lished by this Society are really consistent with the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England. I have touched upon that subject elsewhere. I am now confining myself to *sins of omission*. And is it not evident that, if this Society had been actively and zealously employed in its proper work forty years ago; had it exerted all its energies, and improved all its opportunities, for distributing Bibles, Prayer Books, Homilies, and other Books and Tracts;—and had those Books and Tracts been really in *full accordance* with the Authoritative Writings of the Church, and the other Works of her Reformers and Martyrs;—had they been (as surely they might have been, and ought to have been) mainly republications of those Works, in cheap and convenient forms:—very especially if, when the want of Bibles in various parts of Great Britain became known, and was pressed upon the attention of the Society, rather more than thirty years ago,—it had *then* arisen to the work of Bible-distribution, instead of yielding to I know not what petty jealousies and suspicions, which served only to throw hindrances in the way of that important work:—if, I say, all this had been done, with an energy and zeal worthy of such a Society; what is there which has since been done *at home or abroad* by the Bible Society, the Tract Society, and the Prayer Book and Homily Society, which might not have been done,—*and done much better*,—by the Society for

Promoting Christian Knowledge?—done *regularly*, as the proper acts of the Church of England, in perfect conformity with her principles of Ecclesiastical Polity, as well as of Evangelical doctrine,—and in a manner which would have secured for the Church of England, the best affections and the most earnest prayers of every good man on the face of the whole earth? Let the members of that Society (and also those of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts) look abroad, and consider all that has been *done*, and all that has been *attempted*, by all the various Societies besides, which are now in existence; and then they must say, ‘If we had done our duty, *all this* we ought to have attempted,—*all this* we might have done; and done much better than it otherwise could have been done! and every effort to do it would have given increasing strength and stability to the Church of England;—so that *now* she would have been unassailed and unassailable! But it has *not* been done! we have neglected our duty! we have lost our opportunities! we have fearfully sinned in the way of omission! And *now* we are assailed on every side: *now* we have provoked the just judgements of God, by *leaving undone that which we ought to have done!* And if He should punish us, by overthrowing and destroying both our Church and our Country, a very large portion of the guilt must be laid at *our doors!*’

This may seem to be *very strong* language: but

I know not what language could be *too strong* to express our deep and contrite sense of the Sins of Omission which are chargeable upon the Members of the Church of England. And if it should be found that these *sins of omission* have prepared the way for some grievous sins of *commission* also, in circulating publications contrary to the real Doctrines of the Church of England,—*that* is but the natural progress of evil. When we are obliged to confess that “we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,” we shall soon be constrained to add, “and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.” I make these remarks in special reference to those two great Societies, because they are truly and properly, in their original Constitution, *Church of England Societies*, and as such they stand before the world. Their omissions and deficiencies are therefore, to a certain extent at least, chargeable upon the existing body of the *Church at large*.

In saying all this, I have in constant remembrance, that the very first thing which strikes us, in considering the devotional formularies of our Church, is, *the spirit of profound humiliation which pervades them*. Observe the Sentences from Scripture, with which our Service regularly commences. Consider *the general Confession*, and still more *that in the Communion Service*. Consider the whole of *the Litany*. And compare all these passages in the Liturgy, with

the statements of the Doctrine of Human Corruption in our Homilies. Then turn to the *Communion Service*, and to various expressions in the Forms of Prayer for the *fifth of November*, and the *thirtieth of January*: and will they not teach us plainly, how ready our Church has been, and how ready all her children ought to be, to confess the sins which provoked the judgements that have threatened us, or actually fallen upon us? “We confess it has been *of Thy mercy alone*, that we are not consumed: for *our sins have cried to heaven against us*; and *our iniquities justly called for vengeance upon us*.” “We Thy sinful creatures here assembled before Thee, do, in the behalf of all the people of this land, humbly confess, that *they were the crying sins of this Nation, which brought down this heavy judgement upon us*.” I might indeed transcribe, to illustrate this point, a large portion of the last-mentioned Service. Now, Are such contrite confessions of sin, and such humble cries for mercy, the language of our lips, and of our hearts, *in reference to the present dangers which threaten our Church and our Country*? Do we, in reference thereto, pour out our souls before God in the language of that beautiful Collect in our Litany: “We humbly beseech Thee, O Father, mercifully to look upon our infirmities; and for the glory of Thy Name turn from us all those evils that we most righteously have deserved; and grant that in all our trouble we may put our whole trust and confidence in Thy

mercy, and evermore serve Thee in holiness and pureness of living, to Thy honour and glory; through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

I do not presume to judge the hearts of men; nor can I tell what my brethren are doing in their closets: but the want of the *evident tokens* of such a spirit fill me with more fearful apprehensions for our Church and our Country, than any thing else that I could mention. O that it may please God to "create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we *worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness*, may obtain of Him, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen."

Finally, my dear Reader,—if you have gone along with me in all that I have said in defence and commendation of the Church of England;—if, acknowledging her Doctrine, Discipline, and Constitution, as set forth in her Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies, to be truly sound, Apostolical, and Evangelical, you esteem it an honour and a privilege to belong to this Church;—then let me most earnestly and affectionately remind you, that in exact proportion to your *Privileges* is your *Responsibility*;—and the greater the excellence of the Church to which you belong, the deeper and heavier must be *your* guilt and condemnation, if you should be found a mere worldly, formal,

and unfaithful member of it. If sincere and upright members of the Church of England have the greatest helps and advantages in pressing forward to the kingdom of heaven, it follows of necessity that those who neglect and abuse these advantages, will perish under aggravated guilt, and sink into a deeper and more awful destruction than others: for thus saith our blessed Lord Himself, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke xii. 48). Therefore it behoves every professing member of the Church of England to examine himself with an awful fear and trembling.

Are you a Minister of this Church? Then I beseech you to consider, that your responsibility is the greatest and heaviest of all. O what tongue can tell, or what mind conceive, the awful guilt and condemnation of a faithless Minister of the Church of England? —with such standards before him! with such solemn vows and engagements upon him! with such spiritual prayers in his mouth continually, when he leads the devotions of her children in public Worship! Then I beseech you to examine: Does your constant preaching agree with the *Articles* which you have subscribed? with the *Homilies* which you receive?—Yea, does what you preach from the *Pulpit* agree, and manifestly harmonize, with what you declare from the *Reading Desk*? Have you thought upon

this matter? Have you searched it out? Have you made the comparison? Can every one see, and hear, and feel, that there is a real correspondence and blessed unison between the Pulpit and the Reading Desk in your Church? When you want to explain a Doctrine, do you find the very words of our Articles the best and most suitable words in which to set it forth? If you need a fuller explanation, do the Homilies readily supply it? Is the Commination Service your model in faithfully reprobating sin, and setting forth its awful consequences? Are the two Exhortations, on giving notice of the Communion, the standard that you propose to yourself, and which you endeavour to realize, in dealing closely with the consciences of men? If, on the contrary, none of these things are so much as thought of, what do you mean by calling yourself a Minister of the Church of England? Can you honestly receive the stipends and emoluments of that office?

But, to take a wider range: Are you a *Member of the Church of England, whether Clergyman or Layman?* Is the language of her Liturgy, the language of *your heart?* or is it only the language of *your lips?* Is it the language of *your closet* devotions, as well as of *your public?* by which expression I do not mean to suggest that any Christian is tied to a particular *form* in his *private* devotions: but the *spirit* of our public and private worship ought surely to be one and the same: there must needs be a correspondence

and harmony between them,—if the worshipper be sincere,—if your heart is really in them. As for example (to mention some particulars)—our Church has appointed that nearly the whole of the Old Testament should be read through in the course of the year in her public Services, and the New Testament three times, and the Book of Psalms every month. Will not, then, every devout and faithful member of that Church feel himself bound to make conscience of reading through THE WHOLE BIBLE *every year* (those chapters which are less suitable for the *public* services of the Church being taken into our *private* course of reading;—for all of them are worthy of our attentive perusal; and many of them seem to have been omitted in the Calendar, principally because they require such careful *study*, that the *mere reading* of them *in public* would ill suffice to bring out the instruction they contain)—and the *New Testament* and the *Psalms* will be read more frequently still. So also the *Morning and Evening Service* of our Church was appointed as a *daily Service*;—to be used *daily*, *in addition* to those prayers and supplications which every Christian will of course pour out *in secret*. If then circumstances do not permit your *daily* attendance at Church, or render it expedient, surely God ought not on that account, to have *less* of your time and your devotion? you will not, as a consistent member of the Church of England, spend *less* time in prayer and reading of the Scrip-

tures, morning and evening, than the public Services of our Church, when read with due solemnity, would require. And you will, moreover, have regard to the variety of topics introduced in these prayers,—in addition to those which are private and personal, and which your own circumstances and feelings will suggest; and to the spirit which pervades them—characterized as it is by profound humility, solemn earnestness, and simple dependence upon Christ alone—in whose Name every prayer is offered up—for “no man cometh to the Father but by” Him. (John xiv. 6.) Many other hints a truly consistent member of the Church of England might take from our admirable Liturgy and appointed Services, both with respect to *private* and *family* devotion; and this with the greatest advantage. But the main point of inquiry is this, Are you really sincere and devout in joining in the prayers of our Church? is your heart in them? do you worship God in spirit and in truth, when attending the Services of our Church? and is this made manifest by the holy influence which rests and abides upon your soul, and regulates your life and conversation? Can every one who knows you testify, ‘There goes a consistent Member of the Church of England; his daily walk corresponds with his Sabbath devotions; his conduct evinces the sincerity and earnestness of the *prayers* which he offers?’ As a Member of the Church of England, you have the more reason to look well to all this—“to examine your life and

conversation"¹ in connection with the devotional services in which you join, because our Church has been so careful to provide for the *sanctification of every relation of life*, and of all the circumstances in which Providence may be pleased to place you. Our Church would have you dedicated to God, and introduced into His Church, not later "than the *first or second Sunday next after your birth*;"² and, even at that early period, would provide you with *Christian friends*, solemnly pledged in the face of earth and heaven to see to your *Christian education*. At an early period of life she calls you to take upon yourself publicly your *Baptismal vows*, and to make your own solemn profession of *repentance, faith, and devotedness to God in Confirmation*; that you may, upon the ground of a good Confession, be admitted at once into full Communion with the Church. Are you about to enter into the *married state*? What could be devised to give a more *Christian and holy character* to that important relation, than the Scriptural and truly spiritual Service which our Church has appointed for the solemnization of Matrimony? Are you called to "go down to the sea in ships,—to do business in great waters"—our Church remembers you *there*, in her *Litany*, and provides for you particular "*Forms of*

¹ See the first Exhortation on giving notice of the Sacrament.

² See the Rubric at the Commencement of the Form for Private Baptism.

Prayer to be used at Sea." And, in full accordance herewith, a vessel could not (according to old forms) be cleared out of port (nor could a criminal be tried in our Courts of Judicature) without some solemn and express recognition of important Christian Doctrines. *Are you Sick?* Our Church provides for your instruction and consolation on a sick-bed; that such visitations of Providence may be sanctified to your soul. And whenever any member of your family, or individual of your acquaintance or neighbourhood, is called out of time into Eternity, our Church even for the grave, calls upon you to listen to the voice of Christian admonition, and of Christian comfort and hope. She does what can be done to sanctify to you, and all her children, such bereavements. So that for every occasion, both in life and death, she hath important and blessed lessons to impart. Will not then a consistent Member of that Church feel himself called upon in the most solemn manner, to adopt and act upon the Scriptural rule; "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him:" (1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17.)—that is to say, he is bound by every consideration of duty, propriety, and consistency, to carry out the influence of Christian principle, and pure and undefiled Religion, into all the relations of life, and into every variety of circumstances in which

he can be placed. And very especially, I will add, as a Subject, our Apostolic Church solemnly reminds you of the Scriptural duties of obedience and ready submission to the powers that be, in the Forms of Prayer appointed for *the day of the King's accession*,—for thankful commemoration of the Deliverance of the King and three Estates of the realm from Popish treason and massacre, on *the fifth of November*, and of the Restoration on *the twenty-ninth of May*—and for humble remembrance of the awful crime which was committed, in deposing and murdering our lawful King, on *the thirtieth of January*. Now then let me ask you, Do you enter into the spirit of these Services? Does your devoted and Scriptural loyalty to your King evince, that not in name only, but in the principles which regulate your conduct as a citizen and a subject, you are a consistent Member of that Church, which has been so careful to inculcate the principles of Christian Loyalty and Obedience? It is to me a very sad and awful thing, to see a Minister or Member of the Church of England zealously maintaining the *Political principles of the Dissenters*,—which indeed are drawn, not from the *Scriptures*, but from the polluted fountains of *Infidelity*. And, if you consider yourself as one, who—after arriving at the age of manhood, without any real knowledge of the principles and power of true Religion—have been at length converted from the error of your ways, to enter upon a truly Christian course of life, is this witnessed

(among other proofs of the willing subjection of your whole soul to the authority of Scripture) by your utter renunciation of all *infidel and unscriptural principles in Politics*? I ask this question at the present time, because the spirit of liberalism and radicalism is so widely diffused, that (when called to come out and be separate from a world that lieth in wickedness) it behoves us to take especial heed, that we bring not along with us the taint and infection of *Infidel politics*, to debase our *Christian standard* and blot our *Christian character*. Let us in this respect, as well as others, be true and consistent members of the Church of England; for in so doing we shall prove ourselves docile and obedient disciples of the Divine Author of the Scriptures; who, in those sacred records,—as He has clearly defined our other moral duties,—has also clearly defined the duty of submission to Civil Government, in a manner directly opposed to the principles of self-will and rebellious pride, which so strongly characterize our depraved and fallen race, but in the fullest accordance with all those principles, which ought to characterize the Disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. I might extend these enquiries to further particulars: but these will suffice. If you agree with me, that a truly consistent Member of the Church of England, prepared and resolved, by the grace of God, to follow out and reduce to practice *all* her principles,—in *all* the particular circumstances, and in *all* the various

relations in which he may be placed,—is in the best and surest way to become a Christian of the highest and purest stamp and standard,—a worthy disciple and follower of Confessors and Martyrs;—then remember, I beseech you, that every deviation from consistency is more severely to be censured ;—and a wholly inconsistent and ungodly member of that Church—a mere, empty, carnal, unmeaning, worldly professor, who calls himself a High Churchman perhaps, but has no spiritual understanding of her Articles or Liturgy, who has never learned, with the true circumcision, the Israel of God, to “worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;” (Phil. iii. 3.)—such a man must fall under a heavier weight of condemnation, and meet at the Last Day a more tremendous doom, than any wretched sinner besides on the face of the whole earth ! O my Reader, I speak it not in harshness or ill will, but in love and compassion, as a friendly and faithful warning to thy soul ;—if *thou* art such, and wilt still continue such, and death shall find thee in that awful state, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah,—yea—for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in the Day of Judgement, than for *thee*. (Matt. xi. 24.) If such apprehensions make thee tremble, and it should seem for a moment better to leave the Church, to escape from such fearful responsibilities ;—yield not to that temptation. *The Privileges have*

been vouchsafed; and it is worse than vain for any one to think of escaping from the *Responsibility*, by turning his back upon them. There is not, nor can there be, any escape from that tremendous and unmitigated doom, but by humbling thyself before God, in the confession of thy past sins, and praying Him to give thee “true repentance and His Holy Spirit, that the rest of thy life hereafter may be pure and holy;”—and that, becoming a truly faithful and consistent member of that Church to which it is our privilege to belong, and walking in the path which that Church and the Holy Scriptures have marked out before thee,—thou mayest “come at last to His eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord:” which may God grant to the writer, and to all the readers of this little work, for our Redeemer’s sake. Amen and Amen.

THE END.

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